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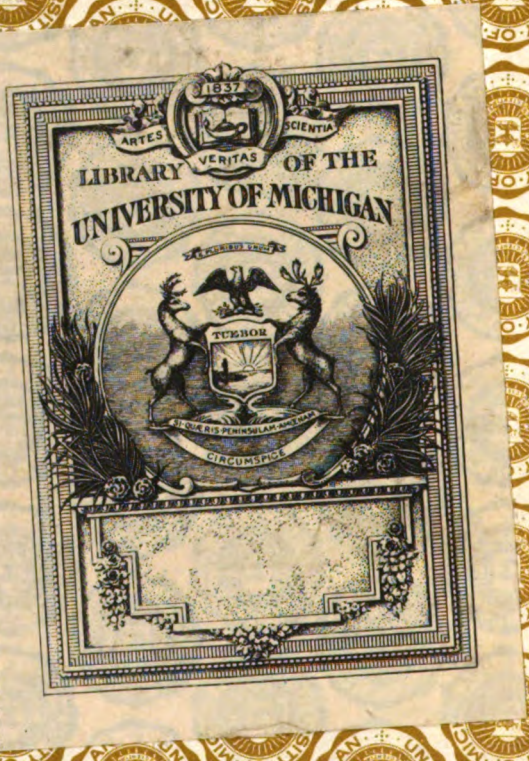
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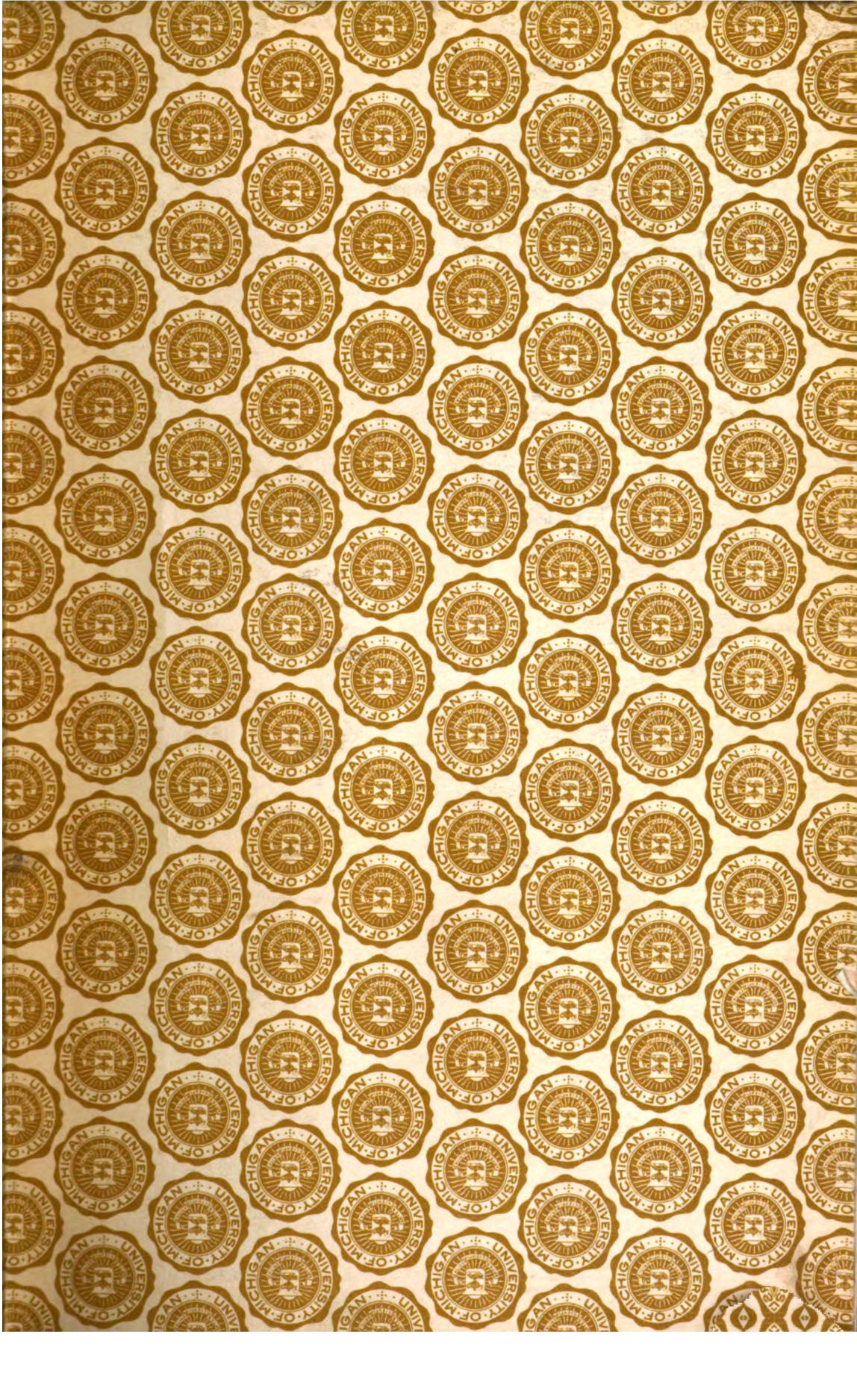

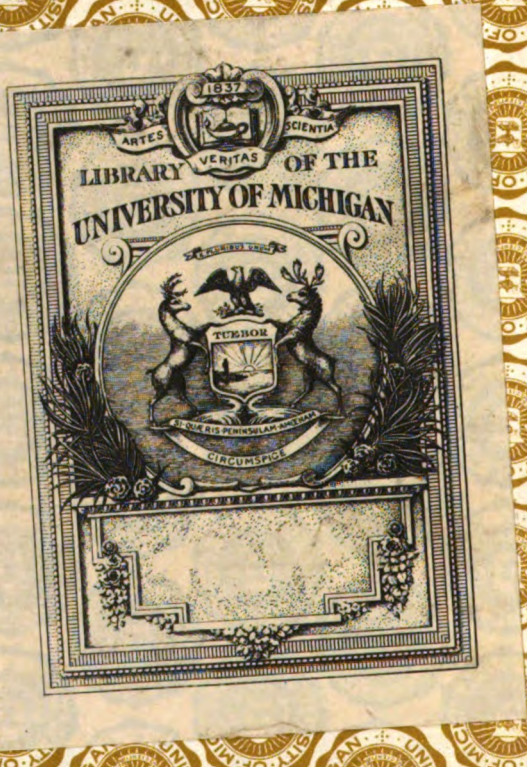
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THE

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An Illustrated Monthly

Vol. LXXIV

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IEW By P.G. WODEHOUSE
TORY

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

A. CONAN DOYLE
EDGAR JEPSON H.A.VACHELL
E.PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

The Perfect Picnic

Delicious!!

Fruit Jelly or Blancmange made with

BROWN & POLSON'S CORN FLOUR

THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for July, 1927.

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Frontispiece: "Young man," said Mr. Briggs, "if an onion with a head like yours came into my factory, I should refuse to pickle it."

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Wherever the right people meet, there you will meet the right cigarette– DE RESZKE –of course!

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To face back of Frontispiece.

JULY, 1927.

"YOUNG MAN," SAID MR. BRIGGS, "IF AN ONION WITH A HEAD LIKE YOURS CAME INTO MY FACTORY, I SHOULD REFUSE TO PICKLE IT."

(See page 3.)

Came the Dawn

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

Illustrated by
CHARLES CROMBIE

THE man in the corner took a sip of stout-and-mild, and proceeded to point the moral of the story which he had just told us.

"Yes, gentlemen," he said, "Shakespeare was right. There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will."

We nodded. He had been speaking of a favourite dog of his which, entered recently by some error in a local cat show, had taken first prize in the class for short-haired tortoiseshells; and we all thought the quotation well-chosen and apposite.

"There is, indeed," said Mr. Mulliner. "A rather similar thing happened to my nephew Lancelot."

In the nightly reunions of the bar-parlour of the Anglers' Rest we have been trained to believe almost anything of Mr. Mulliner's relatives, but this, we felt, was a little too much.

"You mean to say your nephew Lancelot took a prize at a cat show?"

"No, no," said Mr. Mulliner hastily. "Certainly not. I have never deviated from the truth in my life, and I hope I never shall. No Mulliner has ever taken a prize at a cat show. No Mulliner, indeed, to the best of my knowledge, has even been entered for such a competition. What I meant was that the fact that we never know what the future holds in store for us was well exemplified in the case of my nephew Lancelot, just as it was in the case of this gentleman's dog which suddenly found itself transformed for all practical purposes into a short-haired tortoiseshell cat. It is rather a curious story, and provides a good illustration of the adage that you never can tell and that it is always darkest before the dawn."

AT the time at which my story opens (said Mr. Mulliner) Lancelot, then twenty-four years of age and recently come down from Oxford, was spending a few days with old Jeremiah Briggs, the founder and proprietor of the famous Briggs's Breakfast Pickles, on the latter's yacht at Cowes.

This Jeremiah Briggs was Lancelot's uncle on the mother's side, and he had always interested himself in the boy. It was he who had sent him to the University; and it was the great wish of his heart that his nephew, on completing his education, should join him in the business. It was consequently a shock to the poor old gentleman when, as they sat together on deck on the first morning of the visit, Lancelot, while expressing the greatest respect for pickles as a class, firmly refused to start in and learn the business from the bottom up.

"The fact is, uncle," he said, "I have mapped out a career for myself on far different lines. I am a poet."

"A poet? When did you feel this coming on?"

"Shortly after my twenty-second birthday."

"Well," said the old man, overcoming his first natural feeling of repulsion, "I don't see why that should stop us getting together. I use quite a lot of poetry in my business."

"I fear I could not bring myself to commercialize my Muse."

"Young man," said Mr. Briggs, "if an onion with a head like yours came into my factory, I should refuse to pickle it."

He stumped below, thoroughly incensed. But Lancelot merely uttered a light laugh. He was young; it was summer; the sky was blue; the sun was shining; and the things in the world that really mattered were not cucumbers and vinegar, but Romance and Love. Oh, he felt, for some delightful girl to come along on whom he might lavish all the pent-up fervour which had been sizzling inside him for weeks.

And at this moment he saw her.

She was leaning against the rail of a yacht

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that lay at its moorings some forty yards away; and, as he beheld her, Lancelot's heart leaped like a young gherkin in the boiling-vat. In her face, it seemed to him, was concentrated all the beauty of all the ages. Confronted with this girl, Cleopatra would have looked like Nellie Wallace, and Helen of Troy might have been her plain sister. He was still gazing at her in a sort of trance, when the bell sounded for luncheon and he had to go below.

All through the meal, while his uncle spoke of pickled walnuts he had known, Lancelot remained in a reverie. He was counting the minutes until he could get on deck and start goggling again. Judge, therefore, of his dismay when, on bounding up the companion-way, he found that the other yacht had disappeared. He recalled now having heard a sort of harsh, grating noise towards the end of luncheon; but at the time he had merely thought it was his uncle eating celery. Too late he realized that it must have been the raising of the anchor-chain.

ALTHOUGH at heart a dreamer, Lancelot Mulliner was not without a certain practical streak. Thinking the matter over, he soon hit upon a rough plan of action for getting on the track of the fair unknown who had flashed in and out of his life with such tragic abruptness. A girl like that—beautiful, lissom, and, as far as he had been able to tell at such long range, gimp—was sure to be fond of dancing. The chances were, therefore, that sooner or late he would find her at some night club or other.

He started, accordingly, to make the round of the night clubs. As soon as one was raided, he went on to another. Within a month he had visited the Mauve Mouse, the Scarlet Centipede, the Vicious Cheese, the Gay Fritter, the Placid Prune, the Café de Bologna, Billy's, Milly's, Ike's, Spike's Mike's, and the Ham and Beef. And it was at the Ham and Beef that at last he found her.

He had gone there one evening for the fifth time, principally because at that establishment there were a couple of speciality dancers to whom he had taken a dislike shared by virtually every thinking man in London. It had always seemed to him that one of these nights the male member of the team, while whirling his partner round in a circle by her outstretched arms, might let her go and break her neck; and though constant disappointment had to some extent blunted the first fine enthusiasm of his early visits, he still hoped.

On this occasion the speciality dancers came and went unscathed as usual, but Lancelot hardly noticed them. His whole attention was concentrated on the girl seated across the room immediately opposite him. It was beyond a question she.

Well, you know what poets are. When their emotions are stirred, they are not like us dull, diffident fellows. They breathe quickly through their noses and get off to a flying start. In one bound Lancelot was across the room, his heart beating till it sounded like a by-request solo from the trap-drummer.

"Shall we dance?" he said.

"Can you dance?" said the girl.

Lancelot gave a short, amused laugh. He had had a good University education, and had not failed to profit by it. He was a man who never let his left hip know what his right hip was doing.

"I am old Colonel Charleston's favourite son," he said, simply.

A sound like the sudden descent of an iron girder on a sheet of tin, followed by a jangling of bells, a wailing of tortured cats, and the noise of a few steam-riveters at work, announced to their trained ears that the music had begun. Sweeping her to him with a violence which, attempted in any other place, would have earned him a sentence of thirty days coupled with some strong remarks from the Bench, Lancelot began to push her yielding form through the sea of humanity till they reached the centre of the whirlpool. There, unable to move in any direction, they surrendered themselves to the ecstasy of the dance, wiping their feet on the polished flooring and occasionally pushing an elbow into some stranger's encroaching rib.

"This," murmured the girl with closed eyes, "is divine."

"What?" bellowed Lancelot, for the orchestra, in addition to ringing bells, had now begun to howl like wolves at dinner-time.

"Divine," roared the girl. "You certainly are a beautiful dancer."

"A beautiful what?"

"Dancer."

"Who is?"

"You are."

"Good egg!" shrieked Lancelot, rather wishing, though he was fond of music, that the orchestra would stop beating the floor with hammers.

"What did you say?"

"I said 'Good egg.'"

"Why?"

"Because the idea crossed my mind that, if you felt like that, you might care to marry me."

There was a sudden lull in the storm. It was as if the audacity of his words had stricken the orchestra into a sort of

paralysis. Dark-complexioned men who had been exploding bombs and touching off automobile hooters became abruptly immobile and sat rolling their eyeballs. One or two people left the floor, and plaster stopped falling from the ceiling.

"Marry you?" said the girl.

"I love you as no man has ever loved woman before."

"Well, that's always something. What would the name be?"

"Mulliner. Lancelot Mulliner."

"It might be worse." She looked at him with pensive eyes. "Well, why not?" she said. "It would be a crime to let a dancer like you go out of the family. On the other hand, my father will kick like a mule. Father is an Earl."

"Are you rich?" she asked.
"At present, only in love. But to-morrow I go to my uncle, who is immensely wealthy——"

"What Earl?"

"The Earl of Biddlecombe."

"Well, earls aren't everything," said Lancelot with a touch of pique. "The Mulliners are an old and honourable family. A Sieur de Moulinières came over with the Conqueror."

"Ah, but did a Sieur de Moulinières ever do down the common people for a few hundred thousand and salt it away in gilt-edged securities? That's what's going to count with the aged parent. What with taxes and super-taxes and death duties and falling land-values, there has of recent years been very, very little of the right stuff in the Biddlecombe sock. Shake the family money-box and you will hear but the faintest rattle. And I ought to tell you that at the Junior Lipstick Club seven to two is being freely offered on my marrying Slingsby Purvis, of Purvis's Liquid Dinner Glue. Nothing is definitely decided yet, but you can take it as coming straight from the stable that, unless something happens to upset current form, she whom you now see before you is the future Ma Purvis."

Lancelot stamped his foot defiantly, eliciting a howl of agony from a passing reveller.

"This shall not be," he muttered.

"If you care to bet against it," said the girl, producing a small note-book, "I can accommodate you at the current odds."

"Purvis, forsooth!"

"I'm not saying it's a pretty name. All I'm trying to point out is that at the present moment he heads the 'All the above have arrived' list. He is Our Newmarket Correspondent's Five-Pound Special and Captain Coe's final selection. What makes you think you can nose him out? Are you rich?"

"At present, only in love. But to-morrow I go to my uncle, who is immensely wealthy——"

"And touch him?"

"Not quite that. Nobody has touched Uncle Jeremiah since the early winter of 1885. But I shall get him to give me a job, and then we shall see."

"Do," said the girl, warmly. "And if you can stick the gaff into Purvis and work the Young Lochinvar business, I shall be the first to touch off red fire. On the other hand, it is only fair to inform you that at the Junior Lipstick all the girls look on the race as a walk-over. None of the big punters will touch it."

LANCELOT returned to his rooms that night undiscouraged. He intended to sink his former prejudices and write a poem in praise of Briggs's Breakfast Pickles which would mark a new era in commercial verse. This he would submit to his uncle; and, having stunned him with it, would agree to join the firm as chief poetry-writer. He tentatively pencilled down five thousand pounds a year as the salary which he would demand. With a long-term contract for five thousand a year in his pocket, he could approach Lord Biddlecombe and jerk a father's blessing out of him in no time. It would be humiliating, of course, to lower his genius by writing poetry about pickles; but a lover must make sacrifices. He bought a quire of the best foolscap, brewed a quart of the strongest coffee, locked his door, disconnected his telephone, and sat down at his desk.

GENIAL old Jeremiah Briggs received him, when he called next day at his palatial house, the Villa Chutney, at Putney, with a bluff good-humour which showed that he still had a warm spot in his heart for the young rascal.

"Sit down, boy, and have a pickled onion," said he, cheerily, slapping Lancelot on the shoulder. "You've come to tell me you've reconsidered your idiotic decision about not joining the business, eh? No doubt we thought it a little beneath our dignity to start at the bottom and work our way up? But consider, my dear lad. We must learn to walk before we can run, and you could hardly expect me to make you chief cucumber-buyer, or head of the vinegar-bottling department, before you have acquired hard-won experience."

"If you will allow me to explain, uncle——"

"Eh?" Mr. Briggs's geniality faded somewhat. "Am I to understand that you don't want to come into the business?"

"Yes and no," said Lancelot. "I still consider that slicing up cucumbers and dipping them in vinegar is a poor life-work for a man with the Promethean fire within him; but I propose to place at the disposal of the Briggs Breakfast Pickle my poetic gifts."

"Well, that's better than nothing. I've just been correcting the proofs of the last thing our man turned in. It's really excellent. Listen.

"'Soon, soon all human joys must end:
Grim Death approaches with his sickle:
Courage! There is still time, my friend,
To eat a Briggs's Breakfast Pickle.'

"If you could give us something like that——"

Lancelot raised his eyebrows. His lip curled.

"The little thing I have dashed off is not quite like that."

"Oh, you've written something, eh?"

"A mere *morceau*. You would care to hear it?"

"Fire away, my boy."

Lancelot produced his manuscript and cleared his throat. He began to read in a low, musical voice.

"DARKLING (A Threnody).
BY L. BASSINGTON MULLINER.
(*Copyright in all languages, including the Scandinavian.*)
(*The dramatic, musical comedy, and motion-picture rights of this Threnody are strictly reserved. Applications for these should be made to the author.*)"

"What is a Threnody?" asked Mr. Briggs.

"This is," said Lancelot.

He cleared his throat again and resumed.

"Black branches,
Like a corpse's withered hands,
Waving against the blacker sky:
Chill winds,
Bitter like the tang of half-remembered sins;
Bats wheeling mournfully through the air,
And on the ground
Worms,
Toads,
Frogs,
And nameless creeping things;
And all around
Desolation,
Doom,
Dyspepsia,
And Despair.
I am a bat that wheels through the air of Fate;
I am a worm that wriggles in a swamp of Disillusionment;
I am a despairing toad;
I have got dyspepsia."

He paused. His uncle's eyes were protruding rather like those of a nameless creeping frog.

"What's all this?" said Mr. Briggs.

It seemed almost incredible to Lancelot that his poem should present any aspect of obscurity to even the meanest intellect; but he explained.

"The thing," he said, "is symbolic. It essays to depict the state of mind of the man who has not yet tried Briggs's Breakfast Pickles. I shall require it to be printed in hand-set type on deep cream-coloured paper."

"Yes?" said Mr. Briggs, touching the bell.

"With bevelled edges. It must be published, of course, bound in limp leather, preferably of a violet shade, in a limited edition, confined to one hundred and five copies. Each of these copies I will sign——"

"You rang, sir?" said the butler, appearing in the doorway.

Mr. Briggs nodded curtly.

"Bewstridge," said he, "throw Mr. Lancelot out."

"Very good, sir."

"And see," added Mr. Briggs, superintending the subsequent proceedings from his library window, "that he never darkens my doors again. When you have finished, Bewstridge, ring up my lawyers on the telephone. I wish to alter my will."

YOUTH is a resilient period. With all his worldly prospects swept away and a large bruise on his person which made it uncomfortable for him to assume a sitting posture, you might have supposed that the return of Lancelot Mulliner from Putney would have resembled that of the late Napoleon from Moscow. Such, however, was not the case. What, Lancelot asked himself as he rode back to civilization on top of an omnibus, did money matter? Love, true love, was all. He would go to Lord Biddlecombe and tell him so in a few neatly-chosen words. And his lordship, moved by his eloquence, would doubtless drop a well-bred tear and at once see that the arrangements for his wedding to Angela—for such, he had learned, was her name—were hastened along with all possible speed. So uplifted was he by this picture that he began to sing, and would have continued for the remainder of the journey had not the conductor in a rather brusque manner ordered him to desist. He was obliged to content himself until the bus reached Hyde Park Corner by singing in dumb show.

The Earl of Biddlecombe's town residence was in Berkeley Square. Lancelot rang the bell and a massive butler appeared.

"No hawkers, street cries, or circulars," said the butler.

"I wish to see Lord Biddlecombe."

"Is his lordship expecting you?"

"Yes," said Lancelot, feeling sure that the girl would have spoken to her father over the morning toast and marmalade of a possible visit from him.

A voice made itself heard through an open door on the left of the long hall.

"Fotheringay."

"Your lordship?"

"Is that the feller?"

"Yes, your lordship."

"Then bung him in, Fotheringay."

"Very good, your lordship."

Lancelot found himself in a small, comfortably-furnished room, confronting a dignified-looking old man with a patrician nose and small side-whiskers, who looked like something that long ago had come out of an egg.

"Afternoon," said this individual.

"Good afternoon, Lord Biddlecombe," said Lancelot.

"Now, about these trousers."

"I beg your pardon?"

"These trousers," said the other, extending a shapely leg. "Do they fit? Aren't they a bit baggy round the ankles? Won't they jeopardize my social prestige if I am seen in them in the Park?"

Lancelot was charmed with his affability. It gave him the feeling of having been made one of the family straight away.

"You really want my opinion?"

"I do. I want your candid opinion as a God-fearing man and a member of a West-end tailoring firm."

"But I'm not."

"Not a God-fearing man?"

"Not a member of a West-end tailoring firm."

"Come, come," said his lordship, testily. "You represent Gusset and Mainprice, of Cork Street."

"No, I don't."

"Then who the devil are you?"

"My name is Mulliner."

Lord Biddlecombe rang the bell furiously.

"Fotheringay!"

"Your lordship?"

"You told me this man was the feller I was expecting from Gusset and Mainprice."

"He certainly led me to suppose so, your lordship."

"Well, he isn't. His name is Mulliner. And—this is the point, Fotheringay. This is the core and centre of the thing—what the blazes does he want?"

"I could not say, your lordship."

"I came here, Lord Biddlecombe," said Lancelot, "to ask your consent to my immediate marriage with your daughter."

"My daughter?"

"Your daughter."

"Which daughter?"

"Angela."

"My daughter Angela?"

"Yes."

"You want to marry my daughter Angela?"

"I do."

"Oh? Well, be that as it may," said Lord Biddlecombe, "can I interest you in an ingenious little combination mousetrap and pencil-sharpener?"

Lancelot was for a moment a little taken aback by the question. Then, remembering what Angela had said of the state of the family finances, he recovered his poise. He thought no worse of this Grecian-beaked old man for eking out a slender income by acting as agent for the curious little object which he was now holding out to him. Many of the aristocracy, he was aware, had been forced into similar commercial enterprises by recent legislation of a harsh and Socialistic trend.

"I should like it above all things," he said, courteously. "I was thinking only this morning that it was just what I needed."

"Highly educational. Not a toy. Fotheringay, book one Mouso-Penso."

"Very good, your lordship."

"Are you troubled at all with headaches, Mr. Mulliner?"

"Very seldom."

"Then what you want is Clark's Cure for Corns. Shall we say one of the large bottles?"

"Certainly."

"Then that—with a year's subscription to 'Our Tots'—will come to precisely one pound three shillings and sixpence. Thank you. Will there be anything further?"

"No, thank you. Now, touching the matter of——"

"You wouldn't care for a scarf-pin? Any ties, collars, shirts? No? Then good-bye, Mr. Mulliner."

"But——"

"Fotheringay," said Lord Biddlecombe, "throw Mr. Mulliner out."

As Lancelot scrambled to his feet from the hard pavement of Berkeley Square, he was conscious of a rush of violent anger which deprived him momentarily of speech. He stood there, glaring at the house from which he had been ejected, his face working hideously. So absorbed was he that it was some time before he became aware that somebody was plucking at his coat-sleeve.

"Pardon me, sir."

Lancelot looked round. A stout, smooth-faced man with horn-rimmed spectacles was standing beside him.

"If you could spare me a moment——"

"You rang, sir?" said the butler.

Lancelot shook him off impatiently. He had no desire at a time like this to chatter with strangers. The man was babbling something, but the words made no impression upon his mind. With a savage scowl, Lancelot snatched the fellow's umbrella from him and, poising it for an instant, flung it with a sure aim through Lord Biddlecombe's study window. Then, striding away, he made for Berkeley Street. Glancing over his shoulder as he turned the corner, he saw that Fotheringay, the butler, had come out of the house and was standing over the spectacled man with a certain quiet menace in his demeanour. He was rolling up his sleeves, and his fingers were twitching a little.

LANCELOT dismissed the man from his thoughts. His whole mind now was concentrated on the coming interview with Angela. For he had decided that the only thing to do was to seek her out at her club, where she would doubtless be spending the afternoon, and plead with her to follow

the dictates of her heart and, abandoning parents and wealthy suitors, come with her true mate to a life of honest poverty sweetened by love and *vers libre*.

Arriving at the Junior Lipstick, he inquired for her, and the hall-porter dispatched a boy in buttons to fetch her

Mr. Briggs nodded curtly. "Bewstridge," said he, "throw Mr. Lancelot out."

from the billiard-room, where she was refereeing the finals of the Débutantes' Shove-Ha'penny Tournament. And presently his heart leaped as he saw her coming towards him, looking more like a vision of Springtime than anything human and earthly. She was smoking a cigarette in a long holder, and as she approached she inserted a monocle inquiringly in her right eye.

"Hullo, laddie!" she said. "You here? What's on the mind besides hair? Talk quick. I've only got a minute."

"Angela," said Lancelot, "I have to report a slight hitch in the programme which I sketched out at our last meeting. I have just been to see my uncle and he has washed his hands of me and cut me out of his will."

"Nothing doing in that quarter, you mean?" said the girl, chewing her lower lip thoughtfully.

"Nothing. But what of it? What matters it so long as we have each other? Money is dross. Love is everything. Yes, love indeed is light from heaven, a spark of that immortal fire with angels shared, by Allah given to lift from earth our low desire. Give me to live with Love alone and let the world go dine and dress. If life's a flower, I choose my own. 'Tis Love in Idleness. When beauty fires the blood, how love exalts the mind! Come, Angela, let us read together in a book more moving than the Koran, more eloquent than Shakespeare, the book of books, the crown of all literature — Bradshaw's Railway Guide. We will turn up a page and you shall put your finger down, and wherever it rests there we will go, to live for ever with our happiness. Oh, Angela, let us——"

"Sorry," said the girl. "Purvis wins. The race goes by the form-book after all. There was a time when I thought you might be going to crowd him on the rails and get your nose first under the wire with a quick last-minute dash, but apparently it is not to be. Deepest sympathy, old crocus, but that's that."

Lancelot staggered.

"You mean you intend to marry this Purvis?"

"Pop in about a month from now at St. George's, Hanover Square, and see for yourself."

"You would allow this man to buy you with his gold?"

"Don't overlook his diamonds."

"Does love count for nothing? Surely you love me?"

"Of course I do, my desert king. When you do that flat-footed Black Bottom step with the sort of wiggly twiggle at the end, I feel as if I were eating plovers' eggs in a new dress to the accompaniment of heavenly music." She sighed. "Yes, I love you, Lancelot. And women are not like men. They do not love lightly. When a woman gives her heart, it is for ever. The years will pass, and you will turn to another. But I shall not forget. However, as you haven't a bob in the world——" She beckoned to the hall-porter. "Margerison."

"Your ladyship?"

"Is it raining?"

"No, your ladyship."

"Are the front steps clean?"

"Yes, your ladyship."

"Then throw Mr. Mulliner out."

LANCELOT leaned against the railings of the Junior Lipstick, and looked out through a black mist upon a world that heaved and rocked and seemed on the point of disintegrating into ruin and chaos. And a lot he would care, he told himself bitterly, if it did. If Seamore Place from the west and Charles Street from the east had taken a running jump and landed on the back of his neck, it would have added little or nothing to the turmoil of his mind. In fact, he would rather have preferred it.

Fury, as it had done on the pavement of Berkeley Square, robbed him of speech. But his hands, his shoulders, his brows, his lips, his nose, and even his eyelashes seemed to be charged with a silent eloquence. He twitched his eyebrows in agony. He twiddled his fingers in despair. Nothing was left now, he felt, as he shifted the lobe of his left ear in a nor'-nor'-easterly direction, but suicide. Yes, he told himself, tightening and relaxing the muscles of his cheeks, all that remained now was death.

But, even as he reached this awful decision, a kindly voice spoke in his ear.

"Oh, come now, I wouldn't say that," said the kindly voice.

And Lancelot, turning, perceived the smooth-faced man who had tried to engage him in conversation in Berkeley Square.

"Say, listen," said the smooth-faced man, sympathy in each lens of his horn-rimmed spectacles. "Tempests may lower and a strong man stand face to face with his soul, but hope, like a healing herb, will show the silver lining where beckons joy and life and happiness."

Lancelot eyed him haughtily.

"I am not aware——" he began.

"Say, listen," said the other, laying a soothing hand on his shoulder. "I know just what has happened. Mammon has conquered Cupid, and once more Youth has had to learn the old, old lesson that though the face be fair the heart may be cold and callous."

"What——?"

The smooth-faced man raised his hand.

"That afternoon. Her apartment. 'No. It can never be. I shall wed a wealthier wooer.'"

Lancelot's fury began to dissolve into awe. There seemed something uncanny in the way this total stranger had diagnosed the situation. He stared at him, bewildered.

"How did you know?" he gasped.

"You told me."

"I?"

"Your face did. I could read every word. I've been watching you for the last two minutes, and, say, boy, it was a wow!"

"Who are you?" asked Lancelot.

The smooth-faced man produced from his waistcoat pocket a fountain-pen, two cigars, a packet of chewing-gum, a small button bearing the legend, 'Boost for Hollywood,' and a visiting-card—in the order named. Replacing the other articles, he handed the card to Lancelot.

"I'm Isadore Zinzinheimer, kid," he said. "I represent the Bigger, Better, and Brighter Motion-Picture Company of Hollywood, Cal., incorporated last July for sixteen hundred million dollars. And, if you're thinking of asking me what I want, I want you. Yes, sir! Say, listen. A fellow that can register the way you can is needed in my business; and, if you think money can stop me getting him, name the biggest salary you can think of and hear me laugh. Boy, I use bank-notes for summer underclothing, and I don't care how bad you've got the gimme's if only you'll sign on the dotted line. Say, listen. A bozo that with a mere twitch of the upper lip can make it plain to one and all that he loves a haughty aristocrat and that she has given him the air because his rich uncle, who is a pickle manufacturer living in Putney, won't have anything more to do with him, is required out at Hollywood by the next boat if the movies are ever to become an educational force in the truest and deepest sense of the words."

Lancelot stared at him.

"You want me to become a motion-picture actor?"

"I want you, and I'm going to get you. And, if you think you're going to prevent me, you're trying to stop Niagara with a tennis racket. Boy, you're great! When you register, you register. Your face is as chatty as a board of directors. Say, listen. You know the great thing we folks in the motion-picture industry have got to contend with? The curse of the motion-picture

industry is that in every audience there are from six to seven young women with adenoids who will insist on reading out the titles as they are flashed on the screen, filling the rest of the customers with harsh thoughts and dreams of murder. What we're trying to collect is stars that can register so well that titles won't be needed. And, boy, you're the king of them. I know you're feeling good and sore just now because that beazle in there spurned your honest love; but forget it. Think of your Art. Think of your Public. Come now, what shall we say to start with? Five thousand a week? Ten thousand? You call the shots, and I'll provide the blank contract and fountain-pen."

Lancelot needed no further urging. Already love had turned to hate, and he no longer wished to marry Angela. Instead, he wanted to make her burn with anguish and vain regrets; and it seemed to him that Fate was pointing the way. Pretty silly the future Lady Angela Purvis would feel when she discovered that she had rejected the love of a man with a salary of ten thousand dollars a week. And fairly foolish her old father would feel when news reached him of the good thing he had allowed to get away. And racking would be the remorse, when he returned to London as Civilized Girlhood's Sweetheart and they saw him addressing mobs from an hotel balcony, of his Uncle Jeremiah, of Fotheringay, of Bewstridge, and of Margerison.

A light gleamed in Lancelot's eye, and he rolled the tip of his nose in a circular movement.

"You consent?" said Mr. Zinzinheimer, delighted. "'At-a-boy! Here's the pen and here's the contract."

"Gimme!" said Lancelot.

A benevolent glow irradiated the other's spectacles.

"Came the Dawn!" he murmured. "Came the Dawn!"

"Hullo, laddie!" she said. "You here? What's on the mind besides hair? Talk quick. I've only got a minute."

(Next month: "Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!")

Working Backwards

AN EXPLOIT OF PUDGY PETE & CO.

By

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

Illustrated by
S. ABBEY

The Hon. George Vincent Angus and his old school-fellow, Peter Bragg—commonly known by his "House" nickname of "Pudgy Pete"—are conducting a private detective agency on somewhat novel lines. Peter Bragg is a man of considerable wealth, and the firm is therefore able to undertake cases where the financial rewards of success are small.

ANGUS glanced up from behind the pages of *The Financial Times*, which he had been studying intently, and looked across towards his partner.

Pudgy, old man," he inquired, " do you know anything about hosiery ? "

Peter Bragg turned around in some surprise.

" As much as other men, I suppose. I flatter myself, indeed," he went on, " that I have a somewhat correct taste in socks. I always get mine at Beale and Inman's. As regards underclothes——"

" Oh, shut up ! " Angus interrupted. " I don't mean that at all. I mean hosiery—as one of the great commodities of the land —hosiery, the product of great commerical enterprises. Huge works up North, you know, chock full of machinery, where they turn yarn into jerseys and underclothes and God knows what, and issue prospectuses and pay enormous dividends, and that sort of thing."

Peter Bragg for the first time noticed the paper which his partner was reading.

" What are you doing—quoting from a prospectus ? " he asked.

Angus shook his head.

" I was looking to see if I could find the price of some shares. Funny thing, but I met three men yesterday, all on the Stock Exchange, and each one of them took me on one side to ask if I had a little money to spare. Perfectly *wonderful* tip they had—three hosiery companies up in the North somewhere. Shares bound to go up twenty-five per cent. within a month."

" I should stick to the horses," Peter Bragg advised. " You'll lose less."

" Yes, but listen," Angus continued. " I was dining at home last night, and there were one or two City men there. That chap Roscoe was one of them."

" Sir Theodore Roscoe," Peter Bragg repeated, in a tone almost of awe. " Marvellous man, George. A real self-made multi-millionaire."

" Well, they asked him about this over the port. There was a banking chap there who asked him point-blank whether a rumour which was going about the Stock Exchange, that some very interesting amalgamations were under consideration, was true. Pretty snappy, old Roscoe was. Wouldn't answer any questions and asked the banker quite rudely where he'd heard that such a thing was likely. I could have told him that it seems to be all over the Stock Exchange, but he's a formidable-looking old boy, Peter. I should hate to be

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the fellow in his office who's been gassing. Here's one of the companies," he went on, adjusting his monocle and bending lower over the paper. "Leicestershire Hosiery Company, pound shares twenty-eight shillings, plus eighteenpence—went up eighteenpence yesterday, Peter."

"My young friend," Peter Bragg advised, "put that paper away. If there's any cheap money of that sort to be picked up, the Stock Exchange will do it for themselves. It's only when there's a risk they're so anxious to oblige their clients."

"Beastly cynic!" Angus muttered.

THERE was a knock at the door and the butler entered with a card. The last three or four days at the Bellevue, as also at Strand House, had been singularly devoid of interest. Visitors at the former establishment had been either wine merchants, tobacconists, or advertising agents, and Angus had lost that little thrill which the sight of Groves bearing an oblong strip of pasteboard had usually inspired in him. He glanced expectantly towards his partner, however, before returning to his newspaper.

'Sir Theodore Roscoe," Peter Bragg murmured, laying the card upon the table by his side. "Somewhat of a coincidence, George, eh? Show him in, Groves," he directed. "Show Sir Theodore in at once."

Sir Theodore Roscoe—"the people's millionaire," as he was sometimes called, head of one of the greatest industrial concerns of the kingdom, a man of vast wealth and varying interests—duly entered the room, shook hands cursorily with Peter Bragg, and occupied the clients' chair. He was a big, broad-shouldered person, fresh-coloured, with bushy eyebrows, a prominent jaw, and keen, steel-coloured eyes. Even after years of prosperity, of ungrudging admission to the ranks of any society he cared to enter, he wore his City clothes with an air of distaste, even of awkwardness. Yet he presented an impressive, almost a striking, appearance as he settled himself comfortably in his chair and, before stating his business, glanced across at Angus.

"My partner, Mr. Angus," Peter Bragg explained.

"Met you last night dining at the governor's, sir," Angus reminded him, coming forward and shaking hands.

Sir Theodore nodded.

"I remember," he admitted. "You were sitting opposite to me, weren't you, when Lord Morden asked me those damnably impertinent questions about the Midland Hosiery Companies?"

"I was," Angus confessed. "I didn't understand much about it, of course."

"A man in Lord Morden's position," Sir Theodore declared, stiffly, "should know better than to ask questions about an important stroke of business like that before the deals are arranged."

"If you'll forgive my saying so, sir," Angus confided, "there are a good many people seem to know about it. I was given the tip several times yesterday by men who knew something on the Stock Exchange to buy shares in some companies which they said your people were going to take over."

Sir Theodore's eyes for a moment glittered.

'If you take my advice, young man," he said, grimly, "you'll wait. I don't know what view my directors may hold of the present situation—they'll probably do what I suggest. . . . I suppose I may take it for granted that from now on anything I say will be treated confidentially?"

"Absolutely," both partners echoed.

"Then if I had my way at the present moment," Sir Theodore continued, "I should be inclined to drop the amalgamation scheme altogether. We have now arrived at the reason for my visit to you. A robbery has taken place either from my offices in Basinghall Street or from my house in Park Lane. Information of the most confidential nature has been made, comparatively speaking, public property after it has no doubt served the purpose of the thief. I am here to consult you on the matter."

"Pray proceed, Sir Theodore," Peter Bragg begged.

"The affairs of Roscoe's, Limited, are administered by a board of directors numbering seven. For all practical purposes, however, three of us make the decisions, obtaining formal confirmation from a full board afterwards. Some time ago we decided to use a certain amount of surplus capital in buying up various mills in Leicestershire and Yorkshire whose competition is frequently annoying. The only question was which of these mills we should buy and at what price. We had a meeting, just the three of us, in the offices at Basinghall Street a week ago, and came to certain decisions which I jotted down on paper. We were on the point of calling a directors' meeting to obtain formal sanction for the undertaking, when we discovered that the notes I had made at our private conference had been copied by some unauthorized person and had passed out of our possession."

"Not the information only?" Peter Bragg inquired. "You mean the actual document?"

"The actual document has been stolen," Sir Theodore assented, "and a copy left in its place."

Peter Bragg looked a little puzzled.

"Why shouldn't the thief have taken a copy and left you the original?" he demanded.

"A legitimate question," Sir Theodore admitted. "We can only conceive that, having succeeded in making a copy which was remarkably like the original, he, at the last moment, was either careless as to which he took away with him, or was himself deceived. I, in fact, was the only one who noticed any difference, as the whole thing was in my handwriting. There is a slight tear in the second page, however, of which I had no recollection, and there is a trifling difference in the figuring."

"Before we go into details of the robbery," Peter Bragg remarked, "I should like to be quite clear about one thing. You attribute the rise in the shares of these companies to information dispensed by the thief?"

"There is not the slightest doubt about that. Textiles generally are sluggish. The only three shares which have advanced at all are the three companies mentioned in my document."

"Have they advanced as much as the information would warrant?"

"I can't say that they have," Sir Theodore admitted. "The people who are in possession of the information are too clever for that. They will wait until our decisions have been sanctioned by the full board and then go for the shares bald-headed."

"And where exactly is your loss in the matter?"

Sir Theodore snorted impatiently.

"We are to take the shares over at the market price," he pointed out, "and that market price to-day in the three companies concerned is two hundred thousand pounds more than it was. Apart from that, some of us were proposing, quite legitimately, to purchase blocks of shares ourselves."

"One question more on this side of the matter," Peter Bragg concluded. "You never had any doubt, I suppose, that the companies you selected would agree to your terms?"

"There was never any doubt about that at all," Sir Theodore replied, "because, as it happens, we had secured between us a preponderant vote in each of the companies."

PETER BRAGG reflected for a moment. "Supposing," he said, "that this is a theft of the usual sort—that a secretary or an official in your company has possessed himself of the document and copied it—supposing that by introducing one of our detectives amongst your staff I were able to find the guilty person, exactly how would that help you? The news of your intentions, as is proved by the rise in the shares, has already been made public."

"A very reasonable comment, Mr. Bragg," Sir Theodore observed approvingly. "At the same time, however, there are other considerations. I can, without a doubt, directly or indirectly, ruin the thief if I discover who he is. Naturally such retaliatory measures would depend upon how much mischief he has done. Whoever he may be he's not a fool, or he would never have succeeded. So far the advance in the shares has been something like ten per cent. If the actual document in my handwriting had been shown, that advance would probably have been nearer thirty. If we can discover him before our directors' meeting and secure the return of the paper, we can at any rate avoid a portion of the loss."

"The idea was, I think you said," Peter Bragg reflected, "that you should take the shares over at the market price."

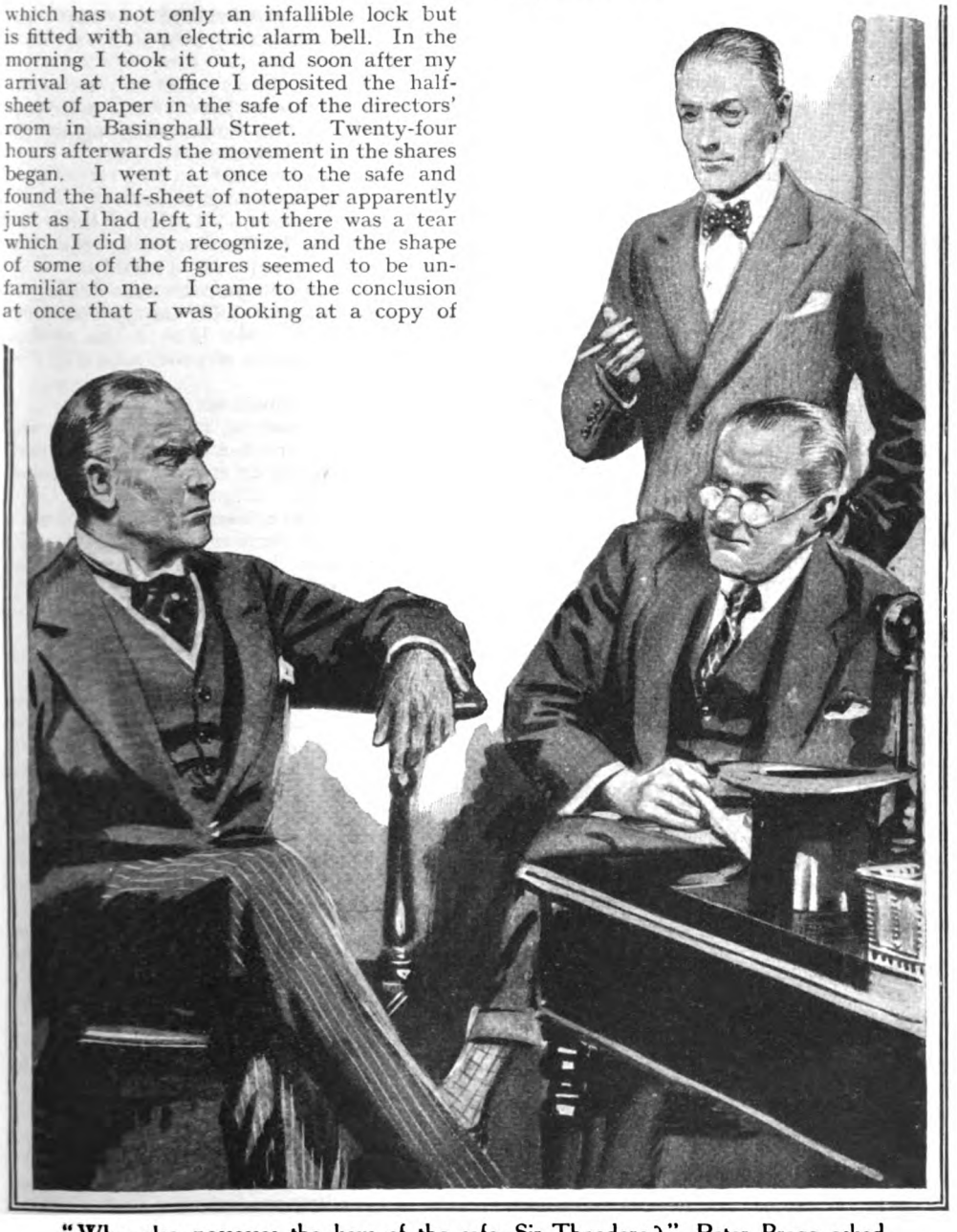
Sir Theodore nodded gloomily.

"That," he pointed out, "is where we have been hit. If they go much higher before we can conclude the deal, our profit will have disappeared."

"And now with regard to the details of this theft?" Peter Bragg inquired. "How many of the directors were present when you made these pencilled notes which were afterwards stolen?"

"Three of us. In the City, in our own circle, at any rate, we are generally known as the 'Big Three,' probably because whatever we decide goes with the remaining directors. The other two are Sir Henry Moses and Lord Mountleaven. All three of us met in the directors' room of my offices in Basinghall Street on Thursday afternoon. Mr. Jameson, the secretary of the company, was present, and also Sir Philip Groves, our auditor—five of us altogether. I talked to them for some time as to the position of the various companies whose products might be of use to us, and finally, on a piece of notepaper which I drew from the rack, I wrote down the names of the three companies which I proposed we should take over and a brief note as to the terms. I passed this round the table and it was inspected by my two fellow-directors and by Sir Philip Groves. Mr. Jameson was out of the room at the time, and the document was not shown to him. There was no discussion; everyone was agreed, and our meeting was over. I placed the half-sheet of notepaper in my pocket-book, where it remained throughout the day. When I changed for dinner I withdrew the pocket-book myself, carried it with me all the evening, and at night I placed it in a small safe that stands by my bedside,

which has not only an infallible lock but is fitted with an electric alarm bell. In the morning I took it out, and soon after my arrival at the office I deposited the half-sheet of paper in the safe of the directors' room in Basinghall Street. Twenty-four hours afterwards the movement in the shares began. I went at once to the safe and found the half-sheet of notepaper apparently just as I had left it, but there was a tear which I did not recognize, and the shape of some of the figures seemed to be unfamiliar to me. I came to the conclusion at once that I was looking at a copy of



"Who else possesses the keys of the safe, Sir Theodore?" Peter Bragg asked.

my original notes and not at the original itself."

"Who else possesses the keys of the safe, Sir Theodore?" Peter Bragg asked, after a moment's pause.

"Only my cashier, John Spurrell, who has been with the firm for thirty-seven years, a man entirely above suspicion. The keys are attached to a steel chain which he wears and were never out of his possession."

"Have you any theory yourself, Sir Theodore?" Peter Bragg asked, after a moment's pause.

"None whatever," was the blunt response. "Whichever way I look I seem to be up against a *cul-de-sac*."

"Your secretary?"

"A young man of the highest character and connections. He is also wealthy and ambitious. As a matter of fact he was not in the room when I wrote down the names of the companies."

"I should like," Peter Bragg said, "to see your directors' room."

"My car is downstairs," Sir Theodore answered. "I will take you there with pleasure—and your partner too if he cares to come," he added, with a glance towards Angus.

THE three men drove in Sir Theodore's limousine down to the palatial offices of Roscoe's, Limited, in Basinghall Street. They passed across a marble floor, between an array of mahogany desks, to a more silent corridor, on either side of which were solid doors, upon whose panels were painted the names of various magnates of the firm. At the end was a room, the door of which Sir Theodore opened with a key from his chain.

"This, gentlemen," he announced, "is the directors' room."

He led the way into a handsome, almost stately apartment, with an oak table in the middle around which were set a dozen chairs. The whole of the wall at one end was taken up by a huge safe. Opposite it hung a fine oil painting of Sir Theodore. Around the other two walls were hung photographs of various properties of the company in all corners of the earth.

"Will you reconstruct the meeting so far as you can?" Peter Bragg suggested. "Call in your secretary, for instance."

Sir Theodore rang a bell, gave some instructions, and a serious-looking young man presently entered whom he introduced as Mr. Jameson. Sir Theodore explained the situation, and seated himself in one of the arm-chairs opposite a rack of stationery. Mr. Jameson took a chair at his left-hand side; opposite, Bragg and Angus represented Sir Henry Moses and Lord Mountleaven respectively. A chair turned up at the far end of the table represented Sir Philip Groves.

"We had been discussing the prospects of the various companies," Sir Theodore announced, "and finally I took a half-sheet of paper from the rack and wrote as I am doing now. Whilst I was engaged like this Mr. Jameson received a summons upon the telephone, left the room, and did not return until our business was concluded."

"And you wrote in pencil?" Peter Bragg inquired.

"Purposely," was the grim reply. "I once had a lesson about blotting-pads."

Peter Bragg glanced around the room and afterwards strolled over and examined the safe.

"You're absolutely certain that the pocket-book never left your possession until you reached home that night, Sir Theodore?" he asked.

"Absolutely certain."

Peter Bragg rose to his feet.

"Well," he said, "I don't think we need make any further demands upon your time for the present, Sir Theodore."

"What steps do you propose taking?" the latter inquired. "I'll engage whomever you like to send down here as an *employé* if you think there's anyone who ought to be watched."

Peter Bragg shook his head.

"Not that sort of case, I am afraid, Sir Theodore," he remarked. "We shall have to approach it from a different angle."

"You wouldn't like to put anyone in my house? My servant never even handled the pocket-book, but you can cross-question him if you wish to."

"I don't think your servant could have been concerned in this, Sir Theodore," Peter Bragg replied. "The whole affair is a little unusual, isn't it? We shall have to find an unusual method of dealing with it."

"You'll remember that time presses," Sir Theodore reminded them, as he showed his visitors out. "It will pay you to give your whole attention to the matter. Your usual fees you will receive in any case, of course, and there will be a thousand pounds from my private purse, and another thousand from the firm, if you can discover the person who copied my figures and is making use of them now."

"A very princely fee," Peter Bragg murmured as he took his leave. . . .

"What do you think of it, Pudgy?" Angus asked, as they clattered back to the Bellevue in a humble taxi.

His partner coughed.

"At present," he admitted, "I do not permit myself to think seriously. I don't want to get a wrong idea into my head. I'm just sending out feelers."

Angus thrust his head through the open window and stopped the driver.

"That," he said, "must be exhausting. Lucky we're just passing the Carlton. What we both need is a cocktail."

"I do not agree with your presumption that alcohol is a natural incentive to the imagination," Peter Bragg declared deliberately, as he followed his companion. "Nevertheless, on this occasion——"

"Two dry Martinis," Angus ordered.

About an hour after lunch that afternoon Peter Bragg roused himself from what appeared to be a very peaceful and profound slumber.

"George," he inquired, "do you know any stockbrokers?"

"Heaps," Angus admitted. "Jolly good fellows, some of them, too. Why?"

His partner rang the bell which summoned Miss Ash.

"My cheque-book, if you please," he demanded.

Neat and noiseless as ever, his secretary produced it and laid it upon the table before him.

"Your balance, sir," she whispered, "is——"

Peter Bragg nodded. He was thinking how pleasant that whisper was and wondering how she arrived at the faint perfume which hung about her severely-brushed hair.

"I am not going to dip very largely into it, Miss Ash," he assured her.

"Fill in the counterfoil clearly, please," she enjoined. "I could scarcely read your figures last time."

She disappeared as noiselessly as she had come. Peter Bragg glanced at the clock and wrote out a cheque payable to George Angus, Esq., for a thousand pounds.

"You probably won't want this money, George," he said; "stockbrokers will buy trifles for you without. Still, you had better cash the cheque and have the notes in your pocket. I want you to go to as many stockbrokers as you know and buy in small parcels several hundred shares of Leicestershire Hosiery, Yates and Perrin, Limited, of Hinkley, and Grateson's, Limited, of Ludborough. Don't buy any two lots from the same broker."

"That's easy business, Peter," Angus agreed. "Might cost you money, though, mightn't it? These shares are all up, and if the old man gets a degree more shirty, it's odds against the amalgamation coming off."

"It may cost a little money, without a doubt," Peter Bragg assented. "On the other hand, the drop, if it comes, won't be more than a few shillings, and there's two thousand pounds waiting for us if we have any luck."

"I don't quite see the idea," Angus admitted.

"It isn't an idea," his partner confessed, "it's just a feeler. And, George!"

"Hullo!"

"Be here punctually in the morning and accept no fresh business without consulting Miss Ash. I'm going to take three days' holiday."

"Liar!" Angus scoffed. "Where are you off to?"

"On what may probably turn out to be a forlorn hope," Peter Bragg replied with dignity, "the nature of which I am not disposed to declare at present."

IN three days Peter Bragg was back again. He said nothing about his journey, but he questioned Angus closely concerning his own operations.

"I have followed out instructions," the latter recounted. "Altogether I have spent about eleven hundred and fifty pounds, and I never bought more than fifty shares from any one firm. I see the price is up again a trifle this morning, so there's a small profit on them already."

"That is of no consequence," Peter Bragg replied. "We are not dealing with that in view. Did you get my letter?"

"I did, and in several cases I succeeded. One firm wouldn't tell me anything about the seller—said they didn't know themselves until they got the shares, and that I must wait for the transfers. One other refused point-blank, said it wasn't usual, but all the others came up to the scratch. Curious thing, too, each lot of the other shares, except one, was sold by the same person."

Peter Bragg's eyes glittered for a moment behind his spectacles.

"What was his name?" he demanded.

"Jack Jacobs, of seventeen, Ludgate Circus."

Peter Bragg spoke for a few minutes on the telephone. Then he leaned back in his chair deep in thought.

"Sir Theodore has rung up twice," Angus confided. "He seemed very curious to know why you'd gone off into the country and what you were doing. He's coming in this morning. I expect that's his ring."

Sir Theodore presented himself a little brusquely. He made no attempt to shake hands with either of the two young men.

"I've been hoping to hear from you, Mr. Bragg," he said, as he threw himself back in the clients' chair. "Is it your custom to absent yourself from your office for three days directly you have an important case placed in your hands?"

"I had nothing to report for the moment, Sir Theodore," was the apologetic reply.

"When I put this matter in your hands," Sir Theodore went on, with a certain amount of irritation in his tone, "I hoped that you might consider it of sufficient importance to have devoted your whole time to it. What the devil do you mean by going out of town within twenty-four hours of taking the job on? Golfing, I suppose, eh?"

place here in London, and the mischief's being done here too. So far as I can make out, you haven't made a move of any sort. No one from your place has been near Basinghall Street or Park Lane. I ring you up for a little information and am simply told that you are out of town. What the devil have you been doing down in the country ? "

Peter Bragg coughed.

" Sir Theodore," he said, " you must forgive me if, for the moment,

" I can assure you," Peter Bragg rejoined, quietly, " that I have been doing nothing of the sort. My temporary absence from London was entirely upon your business."

Sir Theodore's bushy eyebrows drew closer and closer together.

" My business ? What the devil do you mean ? " he demanded. " The theft took I keep my own counsel. I am working in your interests, but I am working in a manner of my own. I have not even confided in my partner here."

Sir Theodore thrust his hands into his trousers pockets and his under-lip protruded more than ever.

" Well, I hope to God you're doing

something," he said, gloomily. "I had a talk with my directors yesterday afternoon, and they're all pretty savage. The shares in every one of those three companies are up between five and seven points since that paper was stolen and copied. The thieving scoundrel, whoever he may be, has helped himself already to nearly half our profits."

"I noticed the rise in the quotations," Peter Bragg admitted.

"Your bank balance, sir," she whispered, "is——"

"I am not going to dip very largely into it, Miss Ash," he assured her.

"I tell you what we decided to do yesterday afternoon," Sir Theodore went on. "We are going to double the reward. Two thousand pounds from each of us, Mr. Bragg. That's worth setting your wits to work about it, isn't it?"

"It is an amazingly generous offer. I am glad to say, too, that I have every confidence in our being able to earn it."

Sir Theodore looked at the speaker keenly.

"Good!" he grunted. "If you don't I'm not at all sure that the whole deal won't fall through. Our idea was to take the three concerns over at about the price the shares stood at a month ago, and not for someone cleverer than us to boost them up and make a fortune for themselves. I want the amalgamation, but I'm damned if we feel like being milked like this. Why, they're making fun of us in the City," Sir Theodore went on, with growing anger in his tone. "My own bank manager called me into his office yesterday and asked me why we couldn't have kept the figures quiet until we closed the deal. Kept them quiet, indeed! What the deuce more could we do? Can you yourself suggest any possible way, Mr. Bragg, in which we could have taken more care of that slip of paper?"

"I certainly cannot. The fact that it should have been taken from your pocket-book without your knowledge during the period of time you have stated presents one of the toughest problems I have ever encountered."

"Nevertheless," Sir Theodore declared, as he rose to his feet, "it's up to you to

solve it. Remember, too, that every hour's delay is costing us thousands."

The financier took his leave, still curt and morose. Angus indulged in a little grimace as the door closed behind him.

"Pudgy," he confided, "I don't like that fellow."

"I have never yet met a man worth five millions whom I did like," Peter Bragg replied, dryly.

"Five millions! Is he really worth as much as that?" Angus asked, in a tone almost of awe.

His partner leaned back in his chair and played with a letter-opener.

"It has interested me," he recounted, "especially as our staff at Strand House has little to do at the moment, to make inquiries about all the people concerned in this affair. One thing I have discovered is that Sir Theodore is a far wealthier man even than people believe. He is almost the largest inscribed holder of War Loan, and, although he has always refused to become a director, he is very nearly the largest shareholder in the most prosperous oil company in the world. His bank deposits, too, I am told, are simply amazing. He likes to keep huge sums of money where he can lay his hand upon them quickly in case anything special turns up. He lent a European Government five millions the other day—a short term loan—absolutely off his own bat. He's a rough chap, George, and disagreeable, but there's a sort of glamour about wealth like that."

Angus nodded sympathetically.

"All the same," he confided, "I don't like his manners." . . .

At four o'clock that afternoon a report from Strand House was brought in by special messenger. Peter Bragg pored over it for a quarter of an hour with obvious satisfaction.

"Anything doing?" Angus inquired, eagerly.

"Just a glimmer of light," his partner admitted. "It may be a will-o'-the-wisp or it may be illumination."

Angus strolled over to the table.

"You're being devilish secretive about this matter, Pudgy," he complained. "Have you anyone from Strand House at Park Lane or at Basinghall Street?"

Peter Bragg shook his head.

"I haven't made a single inquiry at either place," he confided. "I have left all the obvious methods entirely alone. On the other hand, I have one of our shrewdest men and our most beautiful lady assistant haunting the footsteps of Mr. Jack Jacobs of Ludgate Circus."

"And who the devil's he?" Angus demanded.

"The man who is selling shares in Leicestershire Hosiery, Yates and Perrin, and Grateson's as fast as the market will absorb them. That little piece of information was due to your efforts."

Angus tapped a cigarette upon the desk and lit it.

"I believe you're a damned deep fellow, Pudgy," he observed.

Peter Bragg accepted the compliment as his due.

"I know," he confessed, modestly, "when to leave the obvious stuff alone and to start an affair backwards."

"But where the devil does this fellow Jack Jacobs come in, anyhow? What's he got to do with the theft of the paper?" Angus demanded.

"The latter part of your question must remain unanswered for the moment," was the quiet reply. "As regards the rest, if you would care to make his acquaintance, do it now. You will have time to catch him before he leaves his office. Your visit may prove interesting."

"What's to be my line with him?"

"In the first place," Peter Bragg explained earnestly, "you must not disclose your connection with Strand House or with me. You must pose as being a member, or better still a half commission man, in a Stock Exchange firm. Tell him that you understand he is a large holder of Grateson's and Leicestershire Hosiery and Yates and Perrin, and ask him whether it would be possible to arrange a deal outside the market. Get him to make you a firm offer, and there the matter will end. You needn't tell him the name of the house you're supposed to be acting for, but keep your eyes open and bring me word what you think of the man and his business."

Angus took up his hat and stick.

"Await my report," he enjoined. "I will make a profound study of this man with the impossible name. I flatter myself that I shall look the part—an aristocratic tout being made use of by my employers. Something of an ass I must seem to be, I suppose, Pudgy, what?"

"Be perfectly natural," was the dry rejoinder, "and please close the door."

ANGUS had four flights of stairs to climb before he arrived at the offices of Mr. Jack Jacobs of Ludgate Circus, which, although he was in excellent condition and arrived without breathlessness, rather annoyed him. A small girl advanced to the counter and inquired his business. A rapid glance around disclosed a vista of two typists, one seedy-looking bookkeeper, a couple of youths, and an amazing number of business files.

" I should like to see Mr. Jacobs, if he is at liberty," Angus announced.

There was no difficulty at all. Angus was shown forthwith into a bare and dusty-looking office, where, at an untidy table, littered all over with papers, a weary-looking man, with high cheek-bones, sallow complexion, and piercing black eyes, was seated writing. He laid down his pen and looked at his visitor in some surprise, shading his eyes a little with his hand from the light.

" My name is on the card I sent in. I have called to see you on a matter of business, Mr. Jacobs," Angus confided.

The financier waved him to a chair. He seemed very tired, and the weariness of his body was reflected in his tone.

" What can I do for you ? " he asked.

Angus hitched up his trousers at the knees, moved closer to the table, and adopted a confidential tone.

" I'm in with a firm of stockbrokers," he explained—" won't tell you their name for the moment, if you don't mind. I'm only a sort of half-commission bloke—you know what I mean—but they've asked me to come and see you instead of sending one of the firm, as the business they want to open up is a bit on the q.t."

Mr. Jacobs again shaded the upper portion of his face with his hand. Notwithstanding his fatigue, there was a very bright, inquiring look in his deep-set eyes.

" What is this business ? " he demanded.

" My people have been told," Angus continued, " that you are a large holder of Grateson's, Leicestershire Hosiery, and Yates and Perrin—the companies, you know, that Roscoe's are going to take over."

" How do you know that Roscoe's are going to take them over ? " Jacobs asked, swiftly.

Angus looked at him reproachfully.

" Pretty common property in the City, isn't it ? " he rejoined. "Anyway, my people have been told that you hold a good many of these shares. They'd like to have a little flutter in them, but the market, as you know, is a rising one, and if they go to the brokers they'll have forced the shares up many points before they could buy enough to make it worth while. Would you like to make an outside deal, Mr. Jacobs ? "

" I should like to know the name of your firm before I answer that question," was the blunt reply.

" I can t tell you that this afternoon. You can take it, however, that they're good for any amount you can mention. If you'll make us an offer of your stock, Mr. Jacobs, instead of dribbling it out on to the market, you shall have our decision by eleven o'clock to-morrow morning, and a cheque for the shares upon delivery, whether it's a thousand pounds' worth or a million."

Mr. Jacobs drew a small ledger from a drawer by his side and studied it for a moment.

" I hold fifty-eight thousand Grateson's, twenty-two thousand Leicestershire Hosiery, and ninety thousand Yates and Perrin," he announced.

" The devil you do ! " Angus replied, a little startled. " Isn't that rather a large holding for one man ? "

" I have been collecting them," Mr. Jacobs explained, " with a view to this amalgamation. I take it that you are perfectly serious—that you want a firm offer of my holding ? "

" That's what I'm here for," Angus assured him.

The man reflected. Then he drew a sheet of paper towards him, hesitated again, and, crossing the room, studied a tape machine for several moments. Finally he sat down again, wrote for a few minutes, and handed the result across the table.

" There you are," he announced. " I meant to hold a little longer, but for a big deal I'll cut my profits. I have made you an offer at slightly under the price of a quarter of an hour ago. What they're going to do on the street this evening, of course I can't tell, but you may take my word for it prices will be higher, not lower, when markets open to-morrow."

" Until what hour is this offer good ? " Angus inquired.

" Until eleven o'clock to-morrow morning. If you'd come twenty-four hours earlier, I could have offered you another fifty thousand Grateson's. I sold them this afternoon."

Angus glanced around as he folded up the slip of paper and placed it in his pocket.

" You do a big business, Mr. Jacobs," he remarked, " considering the smallness of your premises."

The financier shrugged his shoulders.

" One needs no more in this City than a chair, an office desk, a telephone, pen, paper, and ink," he observed, " and one can deal in millions. Until eleven o'clock to-morrow, then, Mr. Angus." . . .

ANGUS took his leave and returned to Bellevue Mansions. Peter Bragg was deep in the perusal of a report just arrived from Strand House when he entered. He finished it to the last word. Then he turned to his partner.

" Well, what about Mr. Jacobs ?" he asked. " Was he a buyer or a seller ? "

" A seller," Angus replied, passing over the slip of paper.

Peter Bragg studied it and beamed.

"I think," he murmured, "that by to-morrow afternoon I may be able to earn that four thousand pounds."

There was a brief silence. Peter Bragg seemed lost in deep but pleasant reflection. His partner coughed.

"Is it my fancy, old chap, or aren't you being just a bit secretive over this matter?" he complained.

Peter Bragg took off his spectacles and wiped them.

"George," he said, with all solemnity, "we're on to a big thing. In its way it's the most serious affair we ever tackled. Forgive me if I go quietly. You will understand later."

Angus nodded resignedly.

"All right, old chap," he agreed. "Work it out as you think best. I'm here if I'm wanted."

ON the following morning Peter Bragg seated himself at his desk with the slightly nervous air of a man preparing to face a crisis. He left his newspapers unopened and spent some time looking through a collection of reports from Strand House carefully edited by Miss Ash. He had vouchsafed only a cursory nod to his partner.

"Anything doing this morning?" the latter ventured to inquire, after he had glanced through his own little batch of correspondence.

"The climax," was the portentous and unlooked-for reply. "In a matter of five minutes I am going to confide to Sir Theodore Roscoe the name of the miscreant who helped himself to that inside information."

"The devil!" Angus exclaimed, joyfully. "Do you mean to say that we're going to wangle the reward?"

"I believe so. The matter presents some difficulties still; but I think that I see our way to that four thousand pounds."

"It seems too good to be true," Angus murmured, as he listened to the ringing of the bell.

Sir Theodore's manner was as brusque as ever. There was a slightly contemptuous note in his tone as he took his accustomed chair. He scarcely troubled to conceal the fact that he was losing confidence in his advisers.

"Well, Mr. Bragg," he inquired, "any news for me this morning."

"In a way, yes," was the obviously unexpected reply. "I think we have reached what will probably turn out to be the solution of our difficulties."

Sir Theodore was like a man electrified. There was a steely glitter in his eyes as he leaned a little forward, almost as much belligerency as gratification in his manner.

"Do you mean to say that you are in a position to tell me how that half-sheet of paper escaped from my pocket-book or from the safe, and the information got on to the market?"

"I believe that I am."

"Get on with it, then," Sir Theodore enjoined. "Cut it as short as you can."

"It isn't a short story," Peter Bragg warned him, "but I will do my best. You see," he went on, "the case you presented to us was one impossible of solution by the ordinary methods. Provided I was able to accept your statement of what happened as being correct, nothing was to be gained by cross-examining your people in Basinghall Street or your servants in Park Lane. It was obvious that no one could have opened your safe except the person in authority. It was obvious, too, that no one could have helped themselves to your pocket-book, studied its contents at their leisure, and put it back again. All the ordinary procedures would simply have meant waste of time. One had to start, therefore, at the other end of the affair."

"Which end?" Sir Theodore demanded.

"I made it my business," Peter Bragg continued, "to try to get to the bottom of the buying and selling of the shares in those three companies after the information had become whispered around. I found that whilst naturally enough the general public fell easily for the tip of the amalgamation, and bought the shares in reasonable quantities, one firm, and one firm alone, was continually and steadily selling them. That was a firm of finance agents trading under the name of Jack Jacobs."

"Jack Jacobs?" Sir Theodore repeated. "Who the devil's he?"

Peter Bragg referred to one of the reports by his side.

"Mr. Jack Jacobs appears to have been in business for about five years. You probably may remember, Sir Theodore, that he was once in your employ. His financial standing in the commercial rating books seems to be exceptionally high, and his bankers speak of him with the utmost respect."

"I remember the fellow," Sir Theodore admitted—"a pretty shrewd chap, according to all reports. He must have made a fortune last year in rubber. How do you account for the fact, Mr. Bragg, that he was a large and continual seller of shares upon a rising market? Your information is interesting so far as it goes, but the chief thing I want to know is who burgled my safe and rifled my pocket-book? That's where your four thousand pounds comes in."

"I will arrive at that," Peter Bragg

Angus glanced around as he placed the paper in his pocket.
"You do a big business, Mr. Jacobs," he remarked, "considering the smallness of your premises."

promised, leaning a little forward. "This amalgamation has been in your mind, I think, Sir Theodore, for some years. Mr. Jack Jacobs, too, seems to have had an idea that something of the sort might arrive. During the last eighteen months particularly he has been buying continually shares in the three companies concerned almost as they came upon the market. His holding until a short time ago was very large indeed. It was large enough to justify him in believing that if the amalgamation had come off, and the price of the shares at the time had been according to your figures, he would have

made a profit of, I think, something like a hundred thousand pounds."

Sir Theodore's face had become like granite. The truculent impatience of his manner had disappeared. Nevertheless, there was something menacing in his silence.

"Now, Sir Theodore," Peter Bragg went on, "you have the name of being one of the shrewdest men alive in the world of finance and commerce, and a month or so ago you did what should have commended itself to any man having the confidence of his shareholders. Some little thing in the reports of one of the companies—I think it was Grateson's, Limited—gave you food for reflection. You disappeared from London, ostensibly upon your yacht. Instead you visited the North of England and you made a close personal investigation into the affairs of the three companies concerned. What you discovered was doubtless a surprise to you. You found heavy stocks of unsuitable raw material, heavier stocks still of manufactured articles the fashion for which had changed. You found excessive figures for good-will and large sums down for machinery which ought long ago to have been scrapped. When you came back you knew very well that the proposed amalgamation would never be carried out. In the meanwhile, however, there was Mr. Jack Jacobs with four hundred and eighty thousand pounds' worth of shares bought in anticipation of that amalgamation, and the interests of Mr. Jack Jacobs and Sir Theodore Roscoe were pretty well identical."

AFTERWARDS both Peter Bragg and Angus were able to recall with wonder the amazing impassiveness, the entire absence of any change of expression, in the face of the man who listened. Only his under-lip seemed to have protruded a little farther even than usual, and the glitter in his eyes to have become more ferocious.

"An informal meeting of the 'Big Three' amongst the directors of the company, Sir Theodore, was held, as you have recounted. The figures were laid before them exactly as you have stated, but no mention was made of your visit to the North or of your discoveries there. You were justified in withholding them until you had relieved yourself of that four hundred and eighty thousand pounds' worth of shares, because you knew very well that, notwithstanding your attitude at that meeting, the amalgamation would never come to pass and that therefore the directors ran no risk of losing their money. You kept a copy of the names of the three companies and of those figures in your pocket-book, and the original you handed over to Mr. Jack Jacobs to make such use of as he thought fit. One can imagine very well how this was done—a whisper over the luncheon table, a word from a stockbroker in the ear of a rich client, a furtive ring on the telephone—all this, mind, with someone in the background who had seen the names of the three companies and the figures in your own handwriting. It doesn't take long for that sort of news to travel about the Stock Exchange, where everyone is hungry for money. The shares didn't rise anything like as quickly or to the figure which might have been expected, simply because as fast as there were inquiries for them there was Mr. Jack Jacobs selling. You're clear by now, I should imagine, Sir Theodore. Your directors' meeting is due next week and your general meeting a week afterwards, and to the surprise of the whole of the financial world you will declare yourself against the amalgamation and the directors will go with you. You will probably now pay an open visit to the headquarters of the various companies. That, of course, is only surmise."

"Finished?" Sir Theodore demanded, in an utterly toneless voice.

"Pretty well."

"I haven't much to say to you. Where did you get hold of that business about Jack Jacobs?"

"Working backwards again," Peter Bragg confided. "Jack Jacobs was the one man who was selling shares in those three companies. Obviously he knew something. We put Strand House on to Jack Jacobs and found out a few things. He left you at an hour's notice. One of your servants who is still with you remembers his call at your house at midnight and the long interview he had with you. You kept the proofs of the man's misdemeanour, and the next week Jack Jacobs started business as a financial agent with plenty of capital. It's been done before, Sir Theodore, hasn't it? A very useful thing to have a dummy working in your interests."

"And I came to you," Sir Theodore confided with the utmost deliberation, "to bluff the others who thought that those figures had really been stolen, and because I thought that you semi-amateur detectives were fools, and that there was no chance of your really getting anywhere near the truth. So this is what you call the modern science of investigation, eh?—the working backwards system?"

"It has always been my theory," Peter Bragg enunciated, "that one should search for motives rather than for what are known as clues."

Sir Theodore drew his cheque-book from his pocket and moved to the table. There was a hard, inquiring glitter in his eyes.

"The conduct of a high-class investigation agency run on the most approved principles includes, I suppose, the doctrine of professional secrecy?" he demanded, as he handed across the cheque.

"Without a doubt," Peter Bragg assented as he blotted it. "You got rid of your shares which were of doubtful value without loss to anyone except the speculating public. You made use of your directors, perhaps, but you involved them in no financial loss. Your purchase of all those shares on your own account, because you intended to bring about an amalgamation, is a matter of personal ethics with which we are not concerned."

"One more question, Mr. Bragg," Sir Theodore concluded. "You have worked this case, as you admit, by seeking for motives rather than for clues. I am known to be—I believe I am—one of the richest men in this country. Why should you believe that I should take all this trouble to save perhaps fifty or a hundred thousand pounds?"

Peter Bragg smiled.

"Sir Theodore," he replied, "it is my experience that a man's love of money does not depend in the least upon his means. Even though you may be—as I dare say you are—absolutely the richest man in England, I believe that you would work as hard and with as much satisfaction to save a hundred thousand pounds as though that sum stood between you and ruin. That is probably why you are where you are."

Sir Theodore took up his hat.

"Bright lads!" he pronounced, and there was a vein of reluctant and admiring good humour under his concluding profanity. "Blast you both!"

'PUDGY, you're a marvel!" Angus declared admiringly as he watched his partner unlock the mahogany cupboard and produce a gold-foiled bottle of wine and two glasses.

"A success of this kind is certainly stimulating," Peter Bragg murmured, as he filled the glasses. "I desire now, George, a few minutes of your undivided attention."

Angus raised his glass, murmured a word of fervent congratulation, and drank.

"You have it, laddie," he assented, earnestly, setting down his half-empty tumbler.

Peter Bragg fingered his tie.

"I should have added, perhaps, your serious attention," he said. "What I am about to say is not a subject for chaff."

"Never felt less like chaffing," Angus assured him. "At the present moment I would't dare to take a liberty."

"I wish to speak a word to you concerning Miss Ash."

"Why not? A paragon of the firm, I consider her. If it's a question of raising her salary—although that scarcely comes within my province—I'm all for it."

Peter Bragg made no direct reply.

"My attention was first called to the young lady," he went on, "in connection with the time when she dined with you at the *café* in Soho and thereby helped you to grapple with that Lenclos tragedy. You found her on that occasion, I believe, well-mannered and modest."

"She was certainly well-mannered," Angus admitted. "The girl has breeding, I am sure. As to being modest, I have too great a regard for her to attempt any liberties."

"Precisely," Peter Bragg observed, a little coolly. "I feel the same way about the young lady myself. I don't mind telling you, George, that on several occasions lately I have dined with Miss Ash. I have even taken her to the theatre."

"Who wouldn't?" Angus rejoined. "I'd take her to-morrow, only she doesn't give me any encouragement."

"She looks upon you, I believe," his partner confided, "with a certain amount of kindliness, but she regards you as a person of frivolous tendencies. Miss Ash is not frivolous."

Angus sighed.

"Misunderstood again," he murmured.

"Of course," Peter Bragg went on, a little ruefully, "it's a damned obvious thing I'm going to do, but how are you to escape the obvious nowadays with half the world writing detective stories? The feminine interest has to come in, so there you are. Of course it's all wrong. The story-writer should take his material from the world of actual happenings and then the thing shouldn't happen at all. As a matter of fact it too often does. It's going to happen with me."

"You're going to marry Miss Ash?" Angus gasped.

"Get out another glass, George," his partner enjoined. "Ring the bell and then brush your hat. We're due at the registry office in a quarter of an hour."

The Seven Jade Carp

By

EDGAR JEPSON
AND
FRANK BIRKINSHAW

Illustrated by
H. M. BROCK, R.I.

ANNIBAL TOD was a splendid fellow; but he was not walking with his usual splendid air. The end of September was a bad time of the year for a Live Wire whose business was that of Inventors' Agent. Owing to the closing of the lawn-tennis season the demand for Essendene's Patent Plantain Extractor would cease till the spring; the cost of the summer holidays prevented housewives from gratifying their keen desire for Morton's Multiple House-Cleaner; those same holidays had invigorated old gentlemen to a point at which they could not feel an imperative need of Rollason's Rejuvenator. Thoughtlessly he had permitted his mind to turn to his depressed bank account, and he was sharing its depression.

Consequently his splendid air had assumed a gloomily Byronic quality. Then, in Baker Street, he saw the old gentleman.

There are persons, incapable of thinking correctly, who would describe old gentlemen as Annibal's prey, whereas he was their benefactor. It was one of his missions in life, a business as well as a philanthropic mission, to sell to them Rollason's Rejuvenator and bring them back from their decrepit seventies to their roaring forties.

At any rate, at the sight of that old gentleman his bank account fled from his mind, leaving not a wrack behind, and he began to stalk him. He would track him to his home, learn his address, send to it the pamphlets that set forth the virtues of the Rejuvenator, call on him and talk Rejuvenator to him, persuade him to buy one. At the top of Baker Street the old gentleman stepped into a bus. Annibal followed him and took the seat in front of him, so that he would hear his destination and take a ticket to it.

The conductor came; the old gentleman said: "Swiss Cottage, please." The conductor punched a ticket. The old gentleman fumbled in pocket after pocket for his fare; at last he took a five-pound note from his note-case, and, tendering it, said that he was sorry that he had no smaller change.

"Sorry? It's me that's sorry," said the conductor, bitterly. "I ain't the Bank of England. I can't chynge no five-pound notes. I'll have to pay your bloomin' fare meself. *Me!* With a wife and five starvin' children!"

With a gesture of profound despair and a wink over the old gentleman's head at the other passengers, he took two pennies from his pocket and with immense emphasis dropped them, one after the other, into his leather bag.

Annibal turned and said in gracious accents: "Permit me to pay your fare, sir," and without waiting for the permission turned to the conductor and added: "Two to Swiss Cottage."

Registering immense relief at the escape

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Annibal turned and said in gracious accents: "Permit me to pay your fare, sir."

of his wife and five starving children, the conductor gave him the tickets.

"I'm very much obliged to you," said the old gentleman, gratefully. "I'm getting very forgetful—very."

"Very trying," said Annibal, in a tone of respectful sympathy. "Some people seem to be born absent-minded, but in most cases it's only a symptom of mental debility which can be easily removed."

"I'm afraid it's rather a case of Anno Domini with me—Anno Domini," said the old gentleman, mournfully.

"Oh, but nowadays the ravages of Anno Domini can be repaired so easily by anyone who knows how to set about it in the right way," said Annibal, with decision.

He said no more; he had sown the good seed. He turned round and observed the architecture of Park Road.

As they stepped off the bus at Swiss Cottage, the old gentleman said: "Are you by any chance walking up the Finchley Road, sir? If you are, I live just a step off it and I will pay you that twopence."

"My dear sir—a trifle like that!" Annibal protested, but he fell into step beside him.

They had not gone twenty yards when the old gentleman said: "What did you mean by saying that the ravages of Anno Domini could be easily repaired nowadays, if one knew how to set about it the right way?"

Annibal showed no eagerness whatever to explain. That did not lessen the old gentleman's eagerness to learn what he meant, and before they had gone a hundred yards Annibal was talking Rejuvenator with moving eloquence.

At the top of the Burnside Road the old

gentleman stopped and laid a hand on his arm. "I really must pay you that twopence," he said, firmly. "I live in the fourth house there. Besides, I want to hear more about that Rejuvenator."

Annibal said that he had half an hour to spare, and they went to the fourth house and into it. Annibal gathered that the old gentleman only rented half of it, the bottom half, but it was well furnished, and he had no scruples about doing his best further to adorn it with an invigorating Rejuvenator. The old gentleman took him into his study, gave him a cigar of moderate worth, and questioned him about the Rejuvenator. Annibal's answers strengthened his desire to possess one. But when he learnt that the price of it was six guineas, his face fell, and he said that it was a lot of money.

"If you want to be strong and healthy you've got to pay for it in money and taking pains. That's a thing very few people realize," said Annibal, sententiously.

"I must think about it," said the old gentleman, doubtfully. "Six guineas is a lot of money."

Annibal liked him. He was a gentleman and he had a sensitive, very pleasant face. He wanted to do him good.

"I tell you what," he said. "I've never done it before, but I'll let you have one on the hire system—twenty-five shillings down and a guinea a month for five months!"

"That would make it easier—very much easier," said the old gentleman quickly in happier accents.

THE door opened, and a pretty girl entered. Her pale face was uncommonly piquant, and her lips were very red against its paleness. Her hair was really red; her eyes were brown; her chin was determined.

She said: "Tea's ready, uncle," and saw Annibal and looked at him with interest.

Introductions followed. They learnt Annibal's name; he learnt that his host's name was Henry Whipple, that she was his niece, Muriel Whipple. Mr. Whipple invited him to have tea with them; Annibal accepted the invitation with alacrity, for his interest in Mr. Whipple had been greatly increased by the piquant face of his niece.

Over their tea Mr. Whipple told his niece that Annibal had brought to his attention a most valuable invention, a Rejuvenator that knocked years off your age; that he was thinking of buying one. Miss Whipple's attitude of polite interest in Annibal changed; she looked at him with an expression of uneasiness and distrust.

Annibal was used to that look; he had seen it on the faces of relations of other old gentlemen. It was his experience that the relations of old gentlemen kept a close eye on the way in which their aged kinsmen spent their money. They seemed to have a strong prejudice against an aged kinsman spending it on himself, a conviction that it was his duty to spend it only on them, and that the world in general and Annibal in particular were out to do him in the eye. These were strong feelings, hard to contend with. Sometimes Annibal had won, sometimes the relations.

Mr. Whipple said some more about the virtues of the Rejuvenator; then his niece said coldly: "But you know, uncle, that the doctor said you were not to spend your money on drugs."

"But this isn't a drug. It's an electric machine," protested Mr. Whipple.

"Does it cost much?" said Muriel, suspiciously.

"Six guineas," said her uncle.

"Six guineas! For an electric machine! But what a waste of money!" cried Muriel, and she looked at Annibal no longer with distrust, but with loathing.

Opposition was bad for Annibal, since all the worst elements in his nature reacted to it at once, and in the most violent fashion. His resolve to sell a Rejuvenator to Mr. Whipple became inflexible, and he declared suavely, but firmly, that there was nothing on which Mr. Whipple could spend his money to greater advantage, since it would add many more years to his life and make those years much more enjoyable.

"That's what you say, of course," said Muriel, with the engaging frankness of the modern girl, a frankness which made Mr. Whipple frown.

"I shall be charmed to give you introductions to six gentlemen in South Hampstead who will assure you that the Rejuvenator has knocked years off their age," said Annibal to Mr. Whipple yet more suavely.

"Your assurance is quite enough for me," said Mr. Whipple, quietly. "I will have a Rejuvenator on the terms you suggest."

"Splendid!" said Annibal, cheerfully. "And I pledge you my word that you won't regret it. I'll have one sent up to you to-morrow morning and come up in the afternoon to show you how to get the most out of it."

Muriel scowled upon him with murderous enmity. She did not contribute one word to their talk on other subjects during tea; it became quite clear that they had ceased to exist for her, that she was having tea in a solitude; she ceased to be able even to see Annibal. But when he was about to go and her uncle was for taking him to the front door, she rose with some briskness to perform that courteous action herself.

When she had opened it, she looked at him with murderous enmity and said: "It's perfectly putrid your taking all that money off an old man like my uncle for a rotten thing like that—twisting, I call it—twisting!"

Annibal was taken aback by such violence in one so attractive; but he did not meet violence with violence; he said with splendid calmness: "Wait and see," and walked down the steps with a splendid air.

Miss Whipple did not actually bang the door; she shut it loudly.

BEFORE he had gone twenty yards Annibal became aware that his feelings had been outraged. His belief in the Rejuvenator was profound, almost fanatical. That had been outraged. He had been accused of twisting, when it was his no less profound belief that it was the first duty of the Live Wire to deliver the goods, and he always acted on it. That belief had been outraged also. Outrageous was the only word for it. And it was a girl, a red-headed girl, who had done it. It could not be allowed. Such an action could not remain unpunished.

Who were these Whipples? Yes: who were they? The name was familiar to him.

Miss Whipple's modern fashion of speeding the parting guest caused him to make quite sure that a Rejuvenator was sent off from the factory to Mr. Whipple before eleven o'clock the next morning. At four o'clock that afternoon he followed it, to teach Mr. Whipple how to get the fullest benefit from it. After the lesson he had tea with them, or, to be exact, he had tea with Mr. Whipple. Miss Whipple was present indeed, but she seemed unaware of the fact that Annibal was. Again she was having tea in solitude, but in the middle of it she started a subject of her own. She talked at some length about twisters, and how they made her perfectly sick. Annibal expressed his warm sympathy with her. No pleased expression brightened her piquant face at hearing it.

Of a sudden he placed the name of Whipple and said to his host: "Are you by any chance a relation of Benjamin Whipple, the famous collector of jade?"

"He was my brother," said Mr. Whipple.

"Did you ever collect jade yourself?" said Annibal.

Mr. Whipple said that he had never collected jade, but that many years ago his brother had given him some jadeite fish—pretty things, but since they were only jadeite and not the real thing he had not cared much for them. They were upstairs in a box in which he kept odds and ends. Annibal pricked up his ears. The beautiful translucent green jade, of which the finest and most costly pendants are made, is geologically jadeite; but that did not prevent great artists from carving them. Annibal, as a collector of jade, asked if he might see them. Delighted to oblige his benefactor, Mr. Whipple asked Miss Whipple to fetch them.

She sighed the sigh of one called on to perform a horrid task; but she went and presently came back, bringing a flat Coromandel-wood box about ten inches long, eight inches broad, and two inches deep. A very old-fashioned key was in the lock; Mr. Whipple opened the box and handed it to Annibal.

Had he not been an accomplished poker player, Annibal's face would have expressed wild astonishment. In the silk-lined box lay seven fish, carp, of the most beautiful translucent green jade, admirably carved. Keeping his face impassive with difficulty, he took one of them out of the box and examined it. He knew it. He had not collected jade long, but already he knew the literature of the subject. In a recent French book on jade, by Poinsetton, he had seen a reproduction of a drawing of that fish in a Chinese book on art of the seventeenth century. There was no mistaking it; it was the jade carp of the fifteenth-century Emperor of China, Ying Tsung.

He put it back in the box and took out another. It was the same fish. All of them were the same.

For a moment he was at a loss; then the explanation came to him; the Emperor had prized the jade carp, the emblem of happiness and prosperity, and carved by Li Ching, the most famous artist in jade of his time, after the due ceremonies, as a most potent talisman. To guard against its being stolen he must have had six copies of it carved and let it be known that he had done so, so that anyone who succeeded in stealing a green jade carp from him could never be sure that it was the carp carved by Li Ching, the genuine talisman. Some successor, with less faith in the virtue of talismans, had put the seven carp into the same box. Which of the seven was the carp of Li Ching, the genuine talisman?

Examining the fish slowly and carefully to see whether he could find any difference between them, Annibal said that they were very nice. Mr. Whipple said that he had never valued them much because they were not really jade, and Annibal asked if he would care to part with them.

"Well, they have associations, but I shouldn't mind parting with them for a good price—a tenner apiece, say," said Mr. Whipple.

It would have been easy for Annibal to say that he would take them at that price,

for, seeing that each of them was admirably carved and of the finest colour, he thought that they must be worth nearly a hundred apiece. But it would not be fair.

He said: "To get their value you'd have to sell them separately. If you sold them in a lump, without knowing the ropes, you wouldn't get a fifth of what they're worth. I do know the ropes more or less, and I'm pretty sure I could get you a good price for them, and I tell you what I'll do: if you like to give me one of the fish and five per cent. commission, I'll get you considerably more than a hundred for the other six."

"A hundred!" said Mr. Whipple in a tone of pleased surprise. "If you can get me a hundred for these fish I'll give you one of them and five per cent. commission with pleasure."

"Right," said Annibal. "It will take me some time, though."

He locked the box and put the key in his pocket. He talked for a while about Benjamin Whipple's collection of jade and what a pity it was it had been broken up and scattered all over the Western world. Then he rose to go.

Then Miss Whipple said: "It seems rather a pity, uncle, that we shall never see those fish again."

From her tone and the expression on her piquant face it was plain that she meant that they would not see Annibal again either.

"But you'll see the money for them, and since you don't care for them, that will be much better," said Annibal with unruffled amiability.

"Of course we shall," said her uncle, cheerfully.

The expression on Miss Whipple's piquant face was not one of acquiescence, or even pleasing.

She accompanied Annibal to the front door, and as he went through it she said in congratulatory accents: "You are doing well out of uncle. First the Rejuvenator and now these fish."

Annibal could have said many things; but he did say: "Good afternoon."

The piquant, though malignant, face of Miss Whipple remained very present in his mind for several minutes.

BUT on reaching his office with the fish and the strong magnifying-glass he had bought on his way back, his spirits rose. He spread the seven jade carp on his desk and studied and compared them with his naked eye. Then he took the magnifying-glass to them. The exactness with which the carp of Li Ching had been copied was marvellous. It was impossible to say which was the original, which were the copies, and it was the original he desired for himself. They differed slightly in colour and they might differ in weight, but the original might be the lightest or the darkest; it might be the lightest or the heaviest. The problem seemed insoluble.

But there were more expert eyes in the world than his; he rang up his friend, Mr. Probyn, a collector of jade of many years' standing, and said that he would like to show him some puzzling jade, and was told to bring it. He took it. When Mr. Probyn saw the carp, his eyes opened wide indeed.

"By Jove! What have we here?" he said.

"The carp of Ying Tsung and six others," said Annibal, ruefully. "Perhaps you can tell me which it is?"

Mr. Probyn applied himself to the study of the fish with great earnestness. He tried his eye. He tried magnifying-glasses. At the end of half an hour he gave it up.

Then he said: "There's only one man in London, and possibly he's the only man in the world, the greatest expert in jade I ever heard of, who may be able to solve this problem. I'll take you along to him, if you like."

In five minutes they were in Mr. Probyn's Bentley going Westward, and the car carried them to a small house in a drab street in Notting Dale. The door was opened by a small, fat Chinese boy, who greeted Mr. Probyn with a friendly grin and said that his venerable grandfather, Yu Feng, was at home, and ushered them into the back room, where sat an old Chinaman, dressed in European clothes, reading *The Times*. From their greeting Annibal gathered that he and Mr. Probyn were old friends, and after introducing Annibal, Mr. Probyn explained what had brought them.

Yu Feng set the box of fish on the table in front of the window and pored over them for nearly five minutes. Then he took one of them out of the box and set it beside it. Then he took each of the other fish out of the box in turn and felt it, rolling it in his hand and running the tips of his delicate fingers over every part of it. Before putting each back he felt the first carp with the same care in the same fashion.

When he had compared the feel of the six carp in the box with the feel of the first, he held it up and said: "This is the carp of Ying Tsung. My eyes tell me so; my fingers tell me so. Always I have desired to see it. I have seen it. Li Ching was a great master; no finer carp has ever been carved."

He handed the carp of Ying Tsung to

"If you like to give me one of the fish and five per cent. commission, I'll get you considerably more than a hundred for the other six."

Annibal, who rolled it in his handkerchief and put it into his breast pocket and locked up the six others in their box. Then at Mr. Probyn's suggestion Yu Feng gave Annibal a certificate that the carp was the carp of Ying Tsung, which, Mr. Probyn said, would

establish its authenticity for any of the great collectors of jade. He would take no fee.

He said: "To have seen the carp of Ying Tsung is enough. Some day you shall buy a piece of jade from me."

Mr. Probyn drove Annibal to the Annibal Tod offices, and on the way he did his best to persuade him to sell him the famous carp. Failing, he offered him a hundred and fifty pounds for one of the copies. That Annibal accepted, for he knew that Mr. Probyn would treat him with scrupulous fairness. Also he could now set about the selling campaign he had in mind with the exact knowledge of the value of the five carp he had left to sell.

WHEN Mr. Probyn had gone, he addressed himself to the task of learning the difference between the original carp and the copies of it. His eyes still told him nothing; but after he had compared the feel of them, as Yu Feng had done, for ten minutes, the difference between them began to grow clear to him, and the longer he compared them by touch the clearer it grew.

Then he addressed himself to the task of planning his selling campaign. His liking for Mr. Whipple and the desire to make the largest possible commission would have stimulated him to considerable effort; the piquant and disagreeable face of Miss Whipple stimulated him to a splendid effort. She must be taught in a really striking fashion how outrageously she had behaved in suspecting and suggesting that he was swindling her uncle.

In the ordinary course of things he would have had to sell the five carp quickly, almost simultaneously, before it became known to collectors that there was more than one of them. But in seven weeks the Connoisseurs' Art Club was holding a great exhibition of Oriental objects of art. He thought it more than probable that any collector who became possessed of the jade carp of Ying Tsung would keep the fact a secret till it appeared in that exhibition, to the immense mortification of envious rival collectors.

At eleven the next morning he was knocking at the door of the house in Park Lane in which lived the famous collector, Mr. Karl Sprengler. He gave the footman a card on which he had written: "A translucent green jade carp," and told him to take it to his master. The footman sniffed at the card, led him into a drawing-room, and went. In three minutes Mr. Sprengler, a weazened gentleman of some fifty-five summers, with a face of the simian type, jerked into the room.

"Good morning. Show me the carp—the carp—show it to me," he said, with an odd, nervous impatience.

Annibal unwrapped the carp and gave it to him.

Mr. Sprengler's eyes had barely rested on it when they made a good start out of his head, and he cried: "It's—why, it's the jade carp of——" he stopped short and glared at Annibal with eyes that held a world of suspicion.

Then he said: "It's a pretty fish. Yes, quite pretty. I must show it to—to—my wife. Yes, to my wife."

Annibal knew well that he wished to compare it with the drawing in Poinsetton. Why not? He said amiably: "By all means. I'm in no hurry."

Mr. Sprengler went swiftly. He did not return for a good ten minutes. Then Annibal perceived, from his face of a radiant ape, that he had satisfied himself that it was the jade carp of Ying Tsung.

"It is a pretty piece," he said in indifferent accents. "How much do you want for it?"

"Well, I'm selling it for a friend—a Mr. Whipple—and he doesn't know what its value is," said Annibal.

"Whipple! A relation of that scoundrel Benjamin Whipple, the collector?" cried Mr. Sprengler, in shrill astonishment.

"Yes. But was he a scoundrel?"

"Of the deepest dye!" cried Mr. Sprengler, with shrill conviction. "There was no trick, no swindle to which that man would not stoop to get a piece of jade he wanted. Four pieces he got from me—four pieces. But if this fish came from him it settles——"

Again he stopped short, and Annibal asked him what he would give for it.

He hesitated, scanning Annibal's face—it wore an expression of simplicity rather foreign to it—with keen eyes. Then, with a generous air, he said: "Twenty pounds."

Annibal held out his hand for the fish.

The great collector almost screamed that he would give him fifty for it. Annibal stretched out his hand a little farther. Almost frenziedly Mr. Sprengler rose to a hundred, and, since the hand was still outstretched, to a hundred and fifty.

Mindful of his measly offer of twenty pounds, Annibal said: "Two hundred."

He received a cheque for that sum and came away pleasantly contented and leaving happiness behind.

He had barely a hundred yards to go to the house of Mr. Arbuthnot Robins, another great collector. He found him, a tall and portly pleasant man, in a beautiful room, half library, half smoking-room. On the tops of the low bookcases were some twenty fine pieces of Chinese jade and agate and

chalcedony and old crystal. Mr. Robins looked at the fish for perhaps twenty seconds, then brought the Poinsetton book from a shelf, found the drawing, and compared the fish with it.

"Evidently you're not a dealer," said Mr. Robins, smiling.

"No. I collect jade. I'm selling this piece for a friend—an old gentleman of the name of Whipple."

Annibal unwrapped the carp and gave it to Mr. Sprengler, who glared at him with eyes that held a world of suspicion.

"This might easily be the jade carp of Ying Tsung," he said, in astonished accents.

"There is a chance of it," said Annibal. "But since the Chinese have been forging works of art for at least two thousand years, how can one say? I'm certainly not selling it as the carp of Ying Tsung."

There was a gleam in Mr. Robins's eye that just gleamed and vanished, as he said: "How much do you want for it?"

Annibal said that its price was a hundred and fifty pounds, and at once received a cheque for it. He came away pleasantly contented and again left happiness behind.

HE came down into Piccadilly and walked to the gallery of Mr. Percy Tovaro, a wealthy dealer of mixed parentage, who now provided only foreign millionaires with objects of art, since the wealthy English collectors knew too much about him. Annibal told one of his assistants that he had brought a green jade fish uncommonly like the carp of Ying Tsung. The young man sniffed; but when he saw the carp he led Annibal into an inner office and presented him to the great dealer himself. Annibal observed him with interest; he had the liquid eyes of his Armenian father and the thin lips and pointed chin of his Yugo-Slav mother; also he was admirably dressed, as admirably as Annibal himself, but he did not wear his clothes with the same air.

He took the fish from Annibal and at once compared it with the drawing in the Poinsetton book.

Then he looked at Annibal with the frank and liquid Armenian eye and said in rather supercilious accents: "Of course this isn't the carp of Ying Tsung. It's an eighteenth-century copy. I'll——"

"How do you know that?" Annibal broke in.

"It's my business to know these things," said Percy Tovaro, with a haughty impressiveness. "But it's quite a nice piece of jade, and I'll give you fifteen pounds for it."

Once more Annibal held out his hand for the fish.

Percy Tovaro looked at the hand and then at Annibal's face. Then he beamed on him with a sudden, immensely generous kindliness and said: "Well, I'll make it twenty-five."

Annibal's hand came nearer to him.

Percy Tovaro looked at it again; his generous Armenian father disappeared from his expression; his sourer, colder Yugo-Slav mother took his place; he said coldly: "Well, shall we say fifty?"

"Why waste time?" said Annibal.

"Well, what do you want for it?" said Percy, blinking at Annibal's waiting hand.

"Two hundred," said Annibal, again discouraging greed.

Percy Tovaro flushed as he cried with warm indignation: "Absurd! Positively preposterous! Two hundred pounds for an eighteenth-century copy of a jade carp, the very existence of which is doubtful!" And he made as if to hand it back to Annibal.

But he did not hand it back.

"If it's a copy at all, it's fifteenth-century at the latest," said Annibal, firmly.

Percy Tovaro became wholly the bitter Yugo-Slav. Instead of making the six hundred and eighty-five pounds profit he had seen himself making on the carp, he was to be fobbed off with a paltry five hundred. It was a bitter blow. But a happy thought came to him.

He became coldly severe, Draconic. "Before buying a valuable work of art like this, I like to know something about it," he said in icy accents, with a note of menace in them. "I should be much obliged by your telling me how this carp came into your possession."

"Oh, get on!" said Annibal, wearily. "Do you want it, or don't you? There are forty people within a mile of this shop who'll give me two hundred pounds for it. I only offered it to you because I happened to be near your shop."

Percy Tovaro looked at Annibal again and did not like his looks. Once more he became the generous Armenian; he said: "I tell you what I'll do: I'll give you a hundred pounds and objects of art to the value of a hundred and twenty for it. You can choose them yourself from the gallery."

"I can't," said Annibal, gloomily curt.

Again the scowling Yugo-Slav, Percy Tovaro, wrote out, at Annibal's suggestion, an open cheque for two hundred pounds and asked him for a receipt. Annibal made out a receipt for two hundred pounds for a copy of the jade carp of Ying Tsung. He did not think that Percy Tovaro would ever show it to anyone. He took a taxi to the bank and cashed the cheque. Then, feeling immensely capitalist, he paid the seven hundred pounds into his own bank. His commission on it, thirty-five pounds, was a pleasing morning's work; but he came out of the bank looking grim; that red-headed little girl was certainly going to receive a jolt that should sweeten her disposition.

The first part of his task was accomplished to his satisfaction. The really brilliant *coup* was still to bring off. He took his way to Blenkinsop's Auction Rooms and saw Blenkinsop, a large and bluff, hearty and high-coloured man, with black hair and uncommonly bushy eyebrows, and showed him the fifth jade carp, saying that it was uncommonly like the carp of Ying Tsung, and he wished to put it into a sale. Blenkinsop compared the carp with the drawing in Poinsetton and at once begged Annibal to leave it to him. Annibal left it to him.

Ten days later he cashed a cheque for a hundred and fifty pounds and betook himself to 4, Burnside Road. He found Mr. Whipple looking uncommonly fit and feeling uncommonly fit, but annoyed that his niece denied it. Annibal was also annoyed, for her disbelief would lessen the good effects of the Rejuvenator and retard

her uncle's progress towards his roaring forties.

Again he stayed to tea; again Muriel Whipple gave it to them; again she talked of the twisting of old gentlemen and widows and orphans. With an innocent air she asked Annibal whether he knew many widows, and, later, whether he had come across many orphans. Unperturbed by her cold unfaith, Annibal talked of her uncle's splendid fitness and the excellent progress he was making towards his roaring forties. In a patronizing and rather oppressive fashion he pointed out that her failure to perceive that fitness and progress arose from a youthful lack of discernment.

Again, faintly flushed and with sparkling eyes, she escorted him to the front door, and, as he passed through it, said in unpleasant accents and with an unpleasant smile: "Has anything happened about those jade fish?"

Annibal turned sharply on the top step. "Goodness! How forgetful I'm getting!" he exclaimed, and drew from his breast-pocket a packet of notes. "I brought the first hundred and fifty pounds for those fish to give to your uncle and forgot all about it. Let's see; five per cent. is my commission, I think. That leaves a hundred and forty-two pounds ten!"

He looked up at her and saw that she was staring at the notes with her eyes very wide open and her mouth also open. He stripped off a five-pound note, two pound notes, and a ten-shilling note and handed the rest to her.

"You might give them to your uncle," he said. "There ought to be a hundred and forty-two pounds ten. And tell him there's more to come—a good deal more, I hope. Good-bye."

He walked briskly down the steps to the gate, and, as he opened it, half turned. She was still standing on the threshold, looking at him. He noted the fact that you cannot look piquant with your mouth open.

Next morning he received a letter of warm thanks from Mr. Whipple.

HE did not go to see them again till after Blenkinsop's sale, and that sale was quite as interesting as he had expected. Mr. Karl Sprengler and Mr. Arbuthnot Robins and Percy Tovaro were all present. It was plain that each of them believed that the jade carp was a replica of the one they had and was resolved to have it.

Blenkinsop had handled the matter admirably. The catalogue did not definitely state that it was the carp of Ying Tsung, but it conveyed a very strong impression that it could be nothing else, and that impression was deepened by the little speech he made about it when it was put up. The bidding was lively. Many collectors, many dealers, English and foreign, and representatives of the Luxembourg and the Berlin Museum were present. When both Karl Sprengler and Mr. Arbuthnot Robins were seen to be bidding for the carp, all doubt of its authenticity vanished. The bidding rose to five hundred pounds almost with a rush, and then slowed down a little. At six hundred pounds the two collectors and Mr. Percy Tovaro dropped out. The representatives of the Luxembourg and the Berlin Museum carried on the fray fiercely. It had become a national affair. The Berlin Museum won. The carp was knocked down to it for seven hundred and fifty pounds.

Annibal was pleased. He had brought off a more brilliant *coup* than he had hoped to bring off.

As he came out into the street Mr. Arbuthnot Robins caught him up and said that the carp had sold for much more than he had expected.

"I don't think it was dear, looking at it from the point of view of a work of art, if you think of the tedious stuff for which people pay thousands," said Annibal, thoughtfully. "But I do think it was too much to pay for a copy."

"But how do you know it is a copy?" said Arbuthnot Robins, quickly.

"Because I have the original," said Annibal, simply.

"The devil you have!" said Mr. Arbuthnot Robins.

Annibal arranged that he should see it at his office. But he held out no hope of his acquiring it.

The next day he paid Blenkinsop's cheque for six hundred and seventy-five pounds into his bank. Three days later he drew out eleven hundred and sixty-three pounds fifteen, the sum, less his own commission, due to Mr. Whipple.

He contrived to find him and Miss Whipple at tea that afternoon, and saw that Mr. Whipple was looking yet fitter. He congratulated him warmly on that fitness, and Miss Whipple raised no protest. They talked of electricity and health and the events of the day; Miss Whipple did not introduce her favourite subject of the twisting of old gentlemen and widows and orphans. Annibal thought that she looked rather less piquant, a little subdued. She even seemed a trifle nervous and to find some difficulty in meeting his eye. Presently Mr. Whipple thanked him for selling the carp so well for him and added that the extra forty guineas was a very pleasant surprise.

"But I told Miss Whipple to tell you that there was more to come," said Annibal.

"That's good hearing," said Mr. Whipple,

cheerfully. "Muriel was so surprised by your giving her that hundred and forty that she must have failed to grasp it. I hope it will run to a modest fur coat for her. She has always wanted a fur coat."

"Oh, it will run to a few fur coats," said Annibal, carelessly. "Here's the account of the sale of five of the fish and there's the balance, eleven hundred and sixty-three pounds fifteen."

He handed the account and a thick packet of notes and five shillings to Mr. Whipple, and saw that Muriel's lips were again parted.

Mr. Whipple gasped and took them and stammered: "B-b-but, my d-d-dear b-boy, this is astonishing!"

"It is a good price for five copies of the carp of Ying Tsung. But people will be so greedy. I've brought back the sixth fish. I thought you might like Miss Whipple to have a pendant, the replica of which, in the Berlin Museum, cost seven hundred and fifty pounds. And if ever she wants to sell it I can get her a hundred and fifty for it."

"Of course I should, and it's very thoughtful of you," said Mr. Whipple, quickly; then he looked at the account rather unhappily. "But it doesn't seem fair that you should have put all this money into my pocket and only get sixty-eight pounds fifteen yourself."

"Don't forget that I've kept the best fish, which has improved my collection immensely, and don't forget the amusement I got out of getting such prices for them," said Annibal, handing the sixth carp to Muriel.

"It's awfully nice of you—rather—rather splendid," she said, in rather unhappy accents.

"Oh, no. I've done very well out of it," said Annibal.

He had to listen to a fuller expression of Mr. Whipple's gratitude and observed that Muriel wore a rather worried air, and a frown, that made a little cleft between her eyebrows, seemed to have settled for good on her brow. Presently he took his leave of them.

As usual, she accompanied him to the door; half-way down the passage she said in unhappy accents, and the words rather burst out of her: "I was all wrong, and you must think me a perfect little beast!"

"Nothing of the kind," said Annibal, quickly. "I think you're a darling."

With a splendid air, that might have been paternal or might not, he rather suddenly picked her up and kissed her and set her on her feet again.

Her lips were again parted, but her face had recovered its piquancy.

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 168.

To us their difference seems very slight,
But they agreed that they would have a fight.

1. This was the seat of timid heroine.
   One letter change, the maid herself is seen.
2. Who means to part will take an implement
   Made of the rest—one more than resident.
3. What changes what was first in days long past
   To curve will change to this what is now last.
4. Sheriff of Northern isles, writer of fame,
   Here all we ask for is his second name.
5. Half comes with easiness, and half we may
   With hard ness find—affection strange holds sway.
6. Nothing is hidden, all is simple fact,
   According to the letter, quite exact.
7. Is there an actor on the hills? Then here
   Let the poor beggar's other name appear.
8. That five is one or five is clearly true,
   Quite the reverse in Middlesex we view.
9. In spur we find the heart of royalty.
   Half this appears in old cosmogony.
10. Three names had English cleric: first there came
    An Emperor, then this, then foremost dame.

PAX.

Answers to Acrostic No. 168 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on July 12th.*

Two answers may be sent to every light.

It is essential that solvers, with their answers to this acrostic, should send also their real names and addresses.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 167.

(*Third of the Series.*)

1. S	a r d i	S
2. A	r t	H
3. I	d e	A
4. N	i b l i c	K
5. T	h r i c	E
6. G	u e s	S
7. E	q u i	P
8. O	d	E
9. R	o y	A
10. G	c o	R
11. E	v	E

NOTES.—Light 1. Shakespeare, Julius Cæsar, v., 1. Light 2. Hearth, Arthur, Ur. 8. Shelley and Keats. 9. Royal; sovereign, pound. 10. George. 11. Paradise Lost, iv.

For the fifth light of No. 165, "Rotondo" is accepted as a valid alternative.

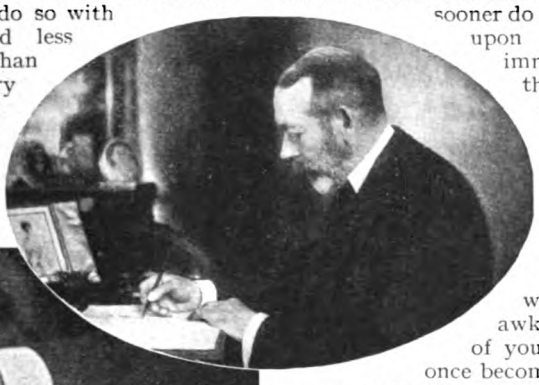
Solvers who write to the Acrostic Editor and desire answers to their queries should, with their letters, enclose stamped addressed envelopes, and he will endeavour to reply.

HOW WE HOLD THINGS

By CLAUDE F. LUKE

I.—PENS AND BRUSHES.

WHEN we perform an act or series of acts which long habit has made part of our subconscious selves, we do so with far greater ease and less expenditure of effort than is the case when we try consciously to control our limbs by reasoned commands from the brain. The fact that we learned in very early childhood to walk and talk, to wash and dress ourselves, to handle a pen, or a knife and fork, has made these several acts part of our natural equipment. We perform them without conscious effort. But no sooner do we expend thought upon them than they immediately present the same difficulties that we encountered when first we mastered them. As you walk along, if you think of your leg movements, your gait will be strange and awkward; be conscious of your speech and it at once becomes affected; study your movements at the table and your knife and fork will for the first time strike you as clumsy and unwieldy instruments.



H.M. THE KING

The truth is that our hands are excellent servants that work willingly and without fatigue only so long as they are not hampered by instructions consciously imposed by us. In performing simple duties over the space of many years our hands have learned to act best independently. Left to themselves they adopt certain positions, certain methods of grip, that are the most natural, and therefore the most convenient and tireless. And it is obvious that these positions will vary with different persons.

H.M. THE QUEEN

To note how various people hold common

How We Hold Things

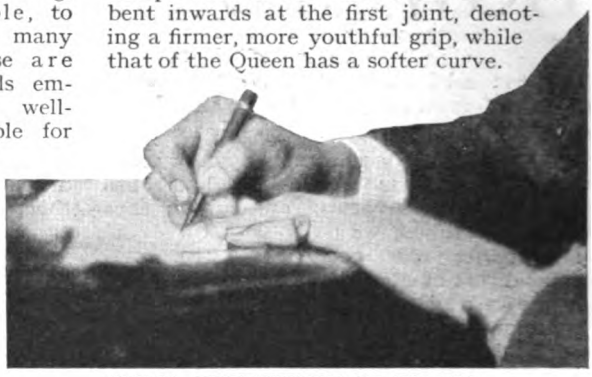
H.R.H. THE DUCHESS OF YORK.

objects makes an interesting study. It is astonishing, for example, to find how many and diverse are the methods employed by well-known people for holding a pen. At first thought it would seem that such an everyday accomplishment must leave little room for characteristic touches, yet a study of the accompanying photographs will speedily disprove this.

As a fact, it is often hard to distinguish any marked difference in pen manipulation between members of the same family.

MR. BALDWIN.

This may be accounted for by a similarity in the shapes of the hands, or as the result of an unconscious imitation of one by the other. Compare, for instance, the three photographs of the hands of the King, the Queen, and the Prince of Wales. It will be seen at a glance that here is a striking example of what may be called a family grip. In each case the wooden end of the pen points, not towards the body, but sharply to the right. The pen is almost a continuation of the line of writing, and in each case is pressed against the first knuckle. The index finger of all three is placed with marked similarity, except that in the case of the Prince it is bent inwards at the first joint, denoting a firmer, more youthful grip, while that of the Queen has a softer curve.



H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES.

Another striking point of semblance is the almost identical position of the left hand, which each of the Royal trio uses to steady the paper. While both the King and the Queen sit squarely with little space between them and their desks, the Prince, on the other hand, favours a more comfortable attitude; his body is inclined away from the desk or table at which he is writing, a position which enables him to lounge slightly and cross his legs.

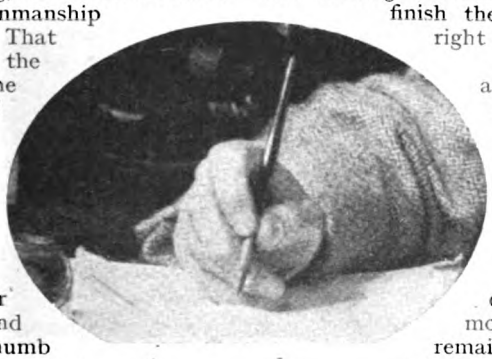
There is something essentially characteristic in the writing pose of the Prime Minister. Mr. Baldwin is, with the exception of Mr. Rafael Sabatini, the only man I know whose right and left forearms make a straight line parallel with the edge of the desk. The effect of this is that the paper must always be at a perfect right angle to his body, while the pen is drawn horizontally across the

MR. RAFAEL SABATINI.

MR. BERNARD SHAW.

surface, its extremity pointing directly right. This peculiarity of hold is undoubtedly the result of much writing, and is so effortless that long periods of penmanship do not fatigue him. That his pen operates from the side accounts for the general thickness of his strokes.

In direct contrast to her husband's parents, the Duchess of York holds her pen so that its end points to her body. She favours a rather thick fountain pen, and the fact that her thumb and forefinger grip the pen like delicate pincers would suggest that it is these digits that are the most employed. In such a position it is possible to use only the point of the nib, which probably accounts for the rather thin, up-and-down style of penmanship characteristic of the Duchess.

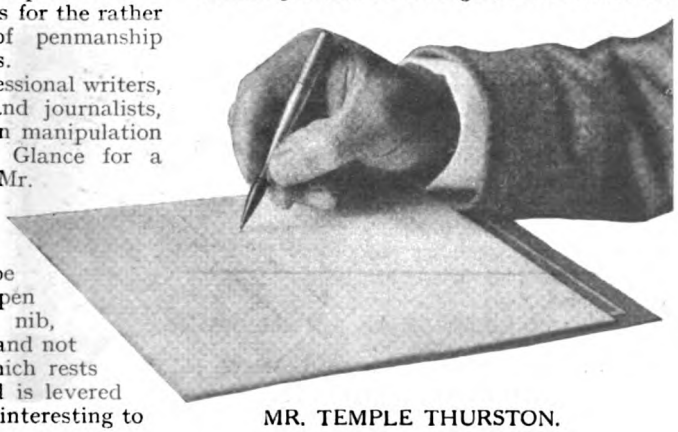


MR. H. A. VACHELL.

It is when one studies professional writers, however, such as authors and journalists, that the idiosyncrasies of pen manipulation are even more apparent. Glance for a moment at the hands of Mr. Rafael Sabatini. His position when he is writing is strikingly similar to that of the Prime Minister. It will be seen, too, that he grasps the pen very low, almost by the nib, while his thumb presses *over* and not at the side of the pen, which rests against the second finger and is levered by the index finger. It is interesting to note that Mr. Sabatini echoes exactly the theories I have already expressed regarding the subconscious economy of effort exercised by the hands of a writer. He said to me recently: "I like the appearance of my handwriting best—or, more properly, dislike it least—when I write with a pen which I may describe as a narrow Relief, which sounds like a contradiction in terms, and is, by the way, a most difficult type of pen to find. I have had several fountain-pen makers attempt to supply what I require, but never quite successfully.

"Apart from the æsthetic consideration mentioned, I prefer a medium-fine ball-pointed pen. This for the sake of fluency, rendered difficult with an ordinary pen by what I believe to be an idiosyncrasy of my own. The angle at which my pen addresses the paper shifts as it crosses the page. I begin at the left-hand margin by leaning the pen over to the left point; gradually as I approach the middle of the page the pen turns until I am writing squarely on both points; thence to the right-hand margin the turning movement continues until I finish the line leaning on the right point.

"I imagine this to be a subconscious attempt to economize movement of the arm, leaving all, or almost all, the work to the hand and wrist. I leave out of account the fingers, because with me they are not concerned in anything more than gripping. They remain entirely inflexible. I grip the penholder very low, immediately above the pen, with the thumb and forefinger, the former leaning well to the left, the latter inclining a little to the right, with the second



MR. TEMPLE THURSTON.

SIR A. CONAN DOYLE.

finger entirely underneath, supporting the pen at the required angle. I write a small, close hand, and although my method of holding the pen may appear cramped to an observer, it does not feel cramped to me, and I have never suffered from writer's cramp."

When I approached Mr. Bernard Shaw, he informed me that without binding himself in any way he might consider discussing with me the peculiarities of his hands on payment of a retaining fee of a thousand pounds! Unfortunately, I had no small change, and so the interview did not materialize, but at least I managed to secure a photograph of the old gentleman in an attitude which his admirers would no doubt describe as "typically Shavian." Dressed in a rough tweed suit and stout knee-length boots with thick rubber soles, he reclined in a chair like those favoured by internal sufferers on board ship. His legs were crossed, and on the anatomical table thus provided by his thighs a writing pad rested. The hand which is shown there is white and delicate. Shaw holds his pen like an artist, with the point addressing the paper squarely. His pale knuckles are bunched high, and in this position he scribbles, scorning to steady the pad with his other hand.

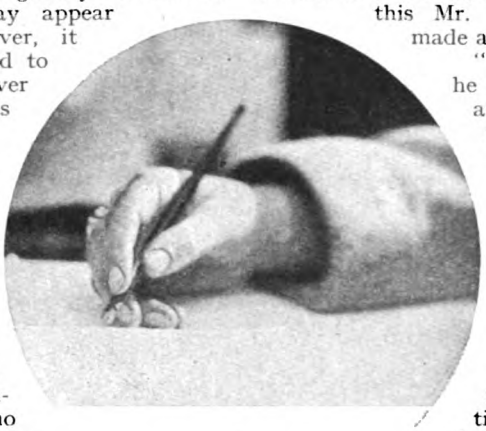
For his stories Mr. H. A. Vachell told me that he had not used a pen for over twenty years, and considered that it would hamper him to do so now. He is devoted to the typewriter. But on the inevitable occasions when he is forced to write with the older medium he has found that the pen itself plays him queer pranks.

"So much depends on the nib," he told me once. "With a broad nib I feel more at my ease, but with a sharply-pointed pen I write what I can hardly recognize as my handwriting. Rough notes are always made in pencil, and here again I like a soft, not a hard lead; and I am sure I grip it as if it were the hand of a friend!"

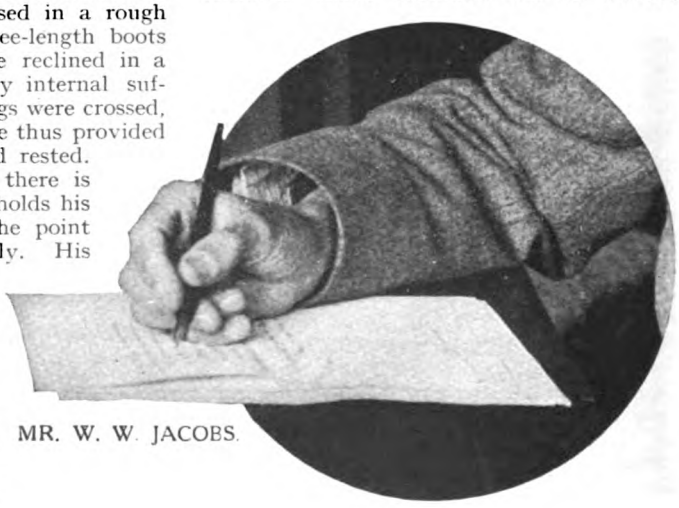
He has found that with the passage of years his handwriting tends to become smaller and smaller, and in connection with this Mr. E. Temple Thurston made a shrewd observation.

"I think you will find," he said, "that nearly all authors write small and usually clear characters. In my own case this arises from a desire that is almost a passion to cram as much as possible on one page. And I have often remarked that as I become immersed in a subject I write more rapidly, my grip tightens, and my writing grows smaller still."

His liking for diminutive characters has caused him to choose a stylograph with an extremely fine point. This instrument holds sufficient ink for almost



MISS REBECCA WEST.

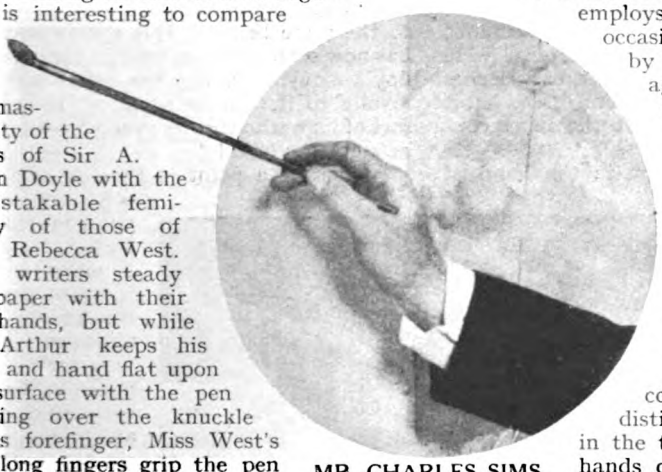


MR. W. W. JACOBS.

SIR JOHN LAVERY, R.A.

exactly a thousand words, a happy circumstance which acts as a subtle check on verbosity! Once when Mr. Thurston was writing a serial that was appearing in a daily newspaper, he fell behind with his supply of copy, and in order to keep abreast he wrote four thousand words in one day, working steadily for fourteen hours. Yet any fatigue he felt was purely mental, his hand finishing as tireless as it began.

It is interesting to compare and contrast the masculinity of the hands of Sir A. Conan Doyle with the unmistakable femininity of those of Miss Rebecca West. Both writers steady the paper with their left hands, but while Sir Arthur keeps his wrist and hand flat upon the surface with the pen pointing over the knuckle of his forefinger, Miss West's fine, long fingers grip the pen loosely with the holder couched in the fleshy valley between the thumb and forefinger, a style in which it is impossible to keep the wrist flat.



MR. CHARLES SIMS, R.A.

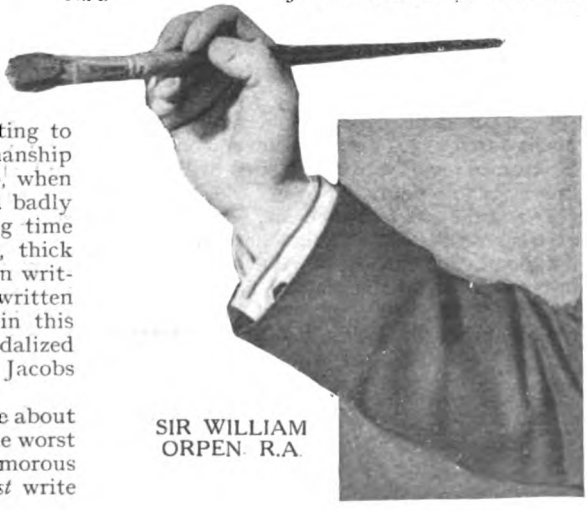
It is only necessary to glance at Mr. W. W. Jacobs in the act of writing to see that to him the labour of penmanship is akin to torture. Many years ago, when he was in the Post Office, he suffered badly with writer's cramp, and for a long time afterwards could use only a large, thick bamboo holder. Ever since he began writing stories he has almost invariably written them in school exercise books, and in this form they have been received by scandalized but impotent editors. (It takes a Jacobs to sell stories thus presented!)

"Editors have been very rude to me about my writing, which I confess is quite the worst in the world," he told me with a humorous twinkle. "The reason is that I *must* write rapidly. I must keep pace with my thoughts, so that I can bite into a vaguely-formed sentence before its details are lost again."

While the study of painters and their methods of grasping pencils and brushes may not provide so fruitful a field, yet the accompanying photographs will show that quite a varied array of styles obtains among our leading artists. It is my experience that, though a man may have used a brush for years, he will be quite powerless to tell you how he wields it until it is placed in his hand.

Such was the case with Sir John Lavery; he merely stared blankly when I put the question. Then he selected a brush and found that he held it about midway along the stem, with his long forefinger over it to supply the pressure. The stem of the brush, it will be noted, is held horizontally. Sir John never employs a mahlstick, but occasionally steadies his hand by resting his little finger against the canvas. A thick-stemmed brush he grasps like a tennis racket, with the full hand, while for fine detail, such as applying a touch of Irish fire to the eye of G. B. Shaw, as he was doing at the time, he holds a fine brush very close to the hairs.

No better example could be obtained of three distinct styles than is shown in the three photographs of the hands of Mr. Charles Sims, Sir John Lavery, and Sir

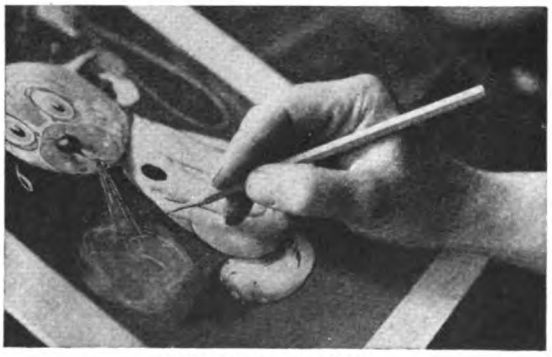


SIR WILLIAM ORPEN, R.A.

William Orpen. Sims's brush is held at the extreme end, his fine, delicate hand grasping it lightly and firmly. Only his first and second fingers are employed. Lavery favours the middle of the stem, while Orpen, with a curious bunching of the fingers, holds his instrument as near the brush as he is able, with a suggestion of firmness and rigidity wholly lacking in the other two. Also his elbow is supported on the arm of the chair from which he works. Sims, though he is seated, has no such support, while Lavery invariably stands. Sir John told me that, although he often paints for over two hours at a stretch with continuous play of his right arm, often over wide stretches of canvas, he never experiences physical fatigue, another proof of the habit of one's hands to seek out the most convenient pose.

MR. G. L. STAMPA.

The silver pencil shown in the hand of Mr. G. L. Stampa, the famous comic artist and caricaturist, is mere "scenery" for the purposes of the photographer. He rarely uses anything but an ordinary wooden lead pencil. When at work he must always have an anchorage at the wrist, leaving his fingers loose and unhampered, and practically all his drawing is done by the grades of pressure of his forefinger. He, too, never complains of cramp, even after working without a break for five hours.



MR. G. E. STUDDY.

It is a delight to watch Mr. G. E. Studdy at work on his famous sketches. He has a unique style which gives the onlooker the impression that he is playing a mute piano. Both hands are employed throughout. In his right he holds his pencil lightly; while his left hand, armed with a piece of putty rubber, follows the pencil over the paper. The movements are almost simultaneous. He draws a line, decides it is wrong, and erases it with his left hand all in the space of a second. A lightning caress, and the faulty line vanishes. Thus his work becomes a series of short bouts with the pencil, constantly interrupted with a rapid flourish of the putty rubber.

For four years Mr. Studdy has drawn Bonzo dogs. And every Bonzo that has capered its comic way through the papers and magazines of the world has owed its life to the same brush. This trusty implement has now scarcely more bristles than a schoolboy's moustache, but the artist still clings loyally to it. As he says: "It is a poor sort of man who throws over a friend because he's getting bald!"

"There is a point in the life of a pencil when it makes work a torture," he added; "and that is when it is too short to pass over the knuckle of the forefinger, and too long for its end to move in the space between the thumb and forefinger. The result is that it sticks painfully into the join between the thumb and forefinger and shows thoroughly bad temper. It draws lines I never intended, applies pressure when I particularly sought fineness, and altogether makes work a misery."

One curious effect of Mr. Studdy's constant drawing is that he now holds an ordinary razor in precisely the same way as he manipulates a pen or pencil. The painful and suicidal contortions of the wrist that this method would entail for the ordinary man must be experienced to be appreciated.

(To follow: "How Ladies Use Their Hands.")

Buster, Butterfingers, and Ginger

By

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

Illustrated by
W. BRYCE HAMILTON

I.

WHEN is cricket not cricket? This question bit deep into the minds of three would-be jokers in short skirts, including one who had no right to wear them.

The victim of a plot, originally intended to disconcert and discomfit eleven males, was Grace (named after the famous "doctor") Preston, who had disappointed her father five minutes after she was born. He described himself as a cricketer and an Imperialist. He had been an enthusiastic admirer of Mr. Rudyard Kipling till that gentleman, in an unguarded moment, spoke of "flannelled fools." The Colonel snorted at the phrase. He refused, henceforward, to read Kipling; he scowled when the great name was mentioned.

In the same spirit of resentment, he scowled at a girl who ought to have been a boy. Being a gentleman, he dissembled with his wife, who, indeed, disarmed resentment with apologies. To the rector of the parish, an old friend, he was outspoken:—

"I had picked the right house at Harrow, I——"

The parson, also a cricketer, smiled.

"You saw your son at Lord's——! I understand everything; but—better luck next time."

The luck refused to change. Mrs. Preston, with every wish to oblige, failed disastrously. Three more daughters succeeded Grace.

To do the Colonel justice, he refused to bow beneath his bludgeonings. His four daughters were "entered" to the national game at the earliest possible age; they lisped cricket long before they could spell the entrancing word. It is said in Dorset—even to-day—that Grace upon her sixth birthday was presented with the smallest pair of pads and the tiniest batting-gloves in the world! The firm of Wisden built a bat for her.

II.

COLONEL PRESTON had inherited a large Georgian house encompassed by a small park, which held, of course, a cricket pitch. Each year, as soon as the summer holidays began, he had what he called "our cricket week." When his girls grew up, the quality of the cricket suffered, because they began to take part in it. As soon as Grace became captain of her school eleven, she was encouraged to entertain friends who could play the game. Finally, the "feature" of the week was a match between "Broomsticks" and "Bats," the trousered being handicapped by having to use a broomstick. The Colonel, true to his ideals, refused to invite bumble-puppies to his house; and his male guests wearing famous ties and hat-ribands dared not disgrace them. And so it came to pass that Grace's eleven, however carefully selected, were invariably defeated.

She spoke of this, mournfully, to Butterfingers, her sister and second in command. Butterfingers was so called derisively, because she never missed a fairly possible catch. She was the youngest of the four Misses Preston, and still at school.

"We shall be hammered again this year." said Grace.

"Yes, it's a sitter. And if we don't win one match soon, we shall never win it."

"Why not?"

"You ask Ginger——"

"Don't be sloppy!"

"I'm not sloppy; but I can detect

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sloppiness in others. You have made up your mind to marry Ginger, and that will put the kibosh on everything. Wait——! I've a brain wave. If Ginger doesn't play against us, we might win."

"We should win."

Ginger was a deadly bowler on a sticky wicket and a run-getting batsman.

Grace considered her sister's suggestion, sorely tempted, as she heard Butterfingers continuing:—

"Last year I thought of 'doping' Ginger, but it was too risky. One word from you, old thing——"

"But I want to *down* Ginger. Really, if I were offered the choice of marrying him or bowling him first ball, I—I don't know what I'd do."

"You can't bowl him, and you *can* marry him."

Grace held her tongue, because head and heart were at civil war. She certainly liked Ginger too well for her peace of mind, because her mind told her that the young man was autocratic both on the cricket field and off it. He "skippered" her, a corroding fact. And he was disarmingly unaware of this. Blest (or cursed) with independent means, he could do what he pleased where he pleased. To make the situation more delicate, he was *persona gratissima* to Colonel Preston. Out of many suitors for the hand of his eldest daughter, the Colonel had picked *him* as the potential father of great cricketers. Already Ginger dared to call the veteran—Daddy.

"You sink your pride," counselled Butterfingers, "and tell Ginger to get a tennis elbow from Harrods or somewhere."

At this moment inspiration descended upon her. She began to laugh hysterically.

"Anything tickling you?" asked Grace.

"An enormous 'if.' We may win our match *if* things go right. If I say another word they will go wrong."

III.

BUTTERFINGERS, not Grace, had bespoken the services of a distinguished school-fellow belonging to a cricketing family, Miss Betty Heatherfield, who had a young brother, a star performer at one of the less well-known public schools, a promising "colt," likely to play for Cambridge some day, and possibly for England. Inasmuch as the Heatherfields lived in Lancashire (and were not mentioned in Kelly or Burke's "County Families"), Colonel Preston knew none of them except Betty. Betty had stayed with Butterfingers; Butterfingers stayed with Betty. The two corresponded; and of late Betty had written with ever-increasing enthusiasm of young Buster, who, according to her, possessed a mastery of the ball quite uncanny in one of tender years and cheeks virgin of a safety razor.

To see Betty at once was Butterfingers' first objective. They met, by the luck of things, at the Eton and Harrow match. Buster was not there.

"You are coming to us, Betty, on the twenty-fifth!"

"You bet your socks."

"You must bring Buster with you disguised as your sister. His complexion knocks spots out of yours and mine. He will look a perfect darling, and win our match for us, unless you are a colossal liar. I have the whole thing cut and dried. I shall arrange that you and he are given the bedroom and dressing-room at the end of the east wing. Then you can vet him."

"Butterfingers!"

"It can be done and it must be done. Buster, if it's his day out, will establish confidence in us. Our bowling has wrecked our chances. It's perfectly hateful to admit it, but we tire too soon. Ginger knows that. He counts on tiring us stiff before we bat; and he counts, too, upon the moral effect of a big score. Always it has been a heads-I-win-tails-you-lose match for the men. They know we're outclassed although we play with bats. They have to bang the ball with the broomsticks—and they do it."

"They won't bang Buster's balls."

"Not if you've told half the truth. Has he really seam-swing?"

"Yes—and a back-kick off the pitch. But, my dear, he won't come. He's gone stark, staring mad over tennis."

Butterfingers pricked both ears.

"Tennis? Could he take on Ginger at tennis?"

"He could give Ginger half-fifteen and romp home."

Butterfingers gurgled.

"You must make him come. If he's half a sport he will come."

Buster did come.

IV.

HE came because he was suffering from calf-love for Butterfingers, and calf-love has been cruelly belittled by everybody except the psycho-analysts. Betty, a slave to the doctrine of expediency, and quite conscienceless where cricket was concerned, dangled her friend as a bait.

"If you down Ginger——"

"I've never met the blighter; I've heard of him, of course. What ice does he cut with Butterfingers?"

"He could support her in the position—to quote the Colonel—which she adorns as his daughter. Behold him as your hated rival!"

"Is he a swine?"

"You can form your own opinion about that when you meet him."

"As a girl I should give myself dead away. It's simply—imposs."

"You're a rotten funk. Butterfingers sets an inordinate value on pluck. If you don't take a wicket—if you make a blob, you'll score heavily with her as a sportsman."

"She looks on me as a boy."

"This is a Heaven-sent opportunity to play the man in my frocks."

"In your frocks?"

"In my *best*. What a sacrifice! We'll do a bit of rehearsing here. You can change into girls' kit at Uncle Arthur's flat in London. It will be a glorious rag. If it comes off you will go up to Cambridge trailing clouds of glory. Butterfingers will be your friend for life."

Buster surrendered.

He had masqueraded as a girl at a fancy dress dance and in private theatricals. But this was a serious affair. For a full fortnight Betty coached him in his part, shortening his stride, and teaching him a maiden's tricks with a powder-puff and a lipstick, not to mention the nice conduct of knife and fork.

"You mustn't whack into your food."

"I shall have to leave the dining-room with the women."

"Until quite lately you have always done that."

"Suppose some silly ass makes love to me?"

"You will deal with him faithfully."

"Suppose some girly girl kisses me?"

"You can accept such a salute in the Early Christian spirit, and as a tribute to your aptitudes as an actor."

Buster grinned. Unquestionably he was warming to his part, much heartened by a letter from Butterfingers, which began: "Dearest boy," and ended: "Yours till we climb the golden stairs and after." In London the metamorphosis was accomplished. In defiance of the law, Buster, in Betty's prettiest frock, walked with his sister the Ladies' Mile. More than one man eyed him admiringly. He could hardly help admiring himself when he passed plate-glass windows in Piccadilly. Betty said, solemnly:—

"If we don't win one match soon, we shall never win it."

"You have the 'come hither' in your eye. I wish that I looked half as alluring as you do."

"Cut out all that tosh."

"I'm speaking warningly; I am indeed. You are the typical *garçonne*. I'm a beastly foil to you. Ginger, who is 'hot stuff,' may fall for you."

"Gosh!"

"Don't clench your fists like you are doing now, if he does. Smile at him derisively; tell him that you're not a baby-snatcher. You might hum 'Here we go gathering nuts in May'!"

"You're putting the wind up me, Betty."

"Anyhow, it's a wonderful adventure."

V.

THE COLONEL welcomed two young ladies on their arrival. Certainly he stared rather hard at Buster, but he was thinking to himself: "This kid is built on the lines of Atalanta." Buster found himself blushing under his host's keen scrutiny, and looked down his nose when that gallant officer pressed his slim hand.

Immediately Butterfingers bustled her two guests up to their bedrooms on the plea that luncheon would be served in a few minutes. Alone with Betty and Buster, she exclaimed, rapturously:—

"You're—IT!"

"Yes, that describes me," said Buster.

"Nobody knows. After luncheon we shall play tennis; after tea there will be practice at the nets. You can send down a ball or two to me—not the best in the basket."

Buster winked. Butterfingers walked round him.

"He's the pick of our bunch, Betty. Billina—we shall call you Billina—I want to kiss you."

"Help yourself," replied Billina, boldly. "I'll take all the kisses I can get from girls, but none from men."

"Then for Heaven's sake don't wink at them, you naughty little darling. I sha'n't kiss you, but I'll powder your pert nose."

She did so delicately.

At luncheon it was noticed that Miss Billina Heatherfield gave undivided attention to her food, answering many questions in shy monosyllables. She owned up to being "useful" at tennis. Betty, at the right moment, said loudly:—

"Billina is a corker at singles, quite as good as the ordinary man."

Ginger rose to the fly.

"I should like to take on Miss Billina and give her fifteen."

"I—I should be scared stiff," faltered Billina, in a soft contralto voice.

Promptly Grace arranged the match, offering to back Billina for half a crown. The Colonel was interested.

"Now, Ginger, lay me two to one on yourself—and I'll take you."

"With pleasure, Daddy. Two to one in—Bradburys?"

The Colonel nodded. Other bets were made. It was significant that the men backed Miss Billina in a chivalrous spirit, simply because she appeared so shy and modest. Obviously Ginger thought he had a "sitter."

He was not quite so sure of this when he watched Billina play her first set in a "four." It was disconcerting to see this Atalanta sprint up after delivering a service remarkable for pace and length. Weak returns were severely punished. The Colonel said in his hearty voice:—

"She looks and plays like a jolly boy."

Ginger nodded.

"I shall come down to the nets to-night."

"So shall I," said Ginger.

Grace, who was Billina's partner, whispered:—

"Ginger is puffing savagely at his pipe. You must crumple him up from the start. Go all out. He hates losing."

Let it be recorded, briefly and kindly, that Ginger was defeated and humiliated. The imps of comedy so ordained it. He was fighting a battle with the knowledge that victory against a girl could not add one leaf to his laurels, whereas defeat would lay him in the dust. Consequently he played badly, driving his balls fiercely into the net or out of court. When the match was over, the Colonel jumped up:—

"Three rousing cheers for Miss Billina."

Ginger, however, accepted defeat like a sportsman. He shook hands with the victrix and congratulated her.

"Why isn't your name Suzanne?" he asked.

"I played above my form," said Billina, bashfully.

The authentic Buster, admiring an Olympian at a respectful distance, experienced pangs of pity. He wondered why Grace wanted to "crumple up" such a splendid fellow.

"You'll beat me easily next time, Sir George."

VI.

AT the ladies' nets, that evening, Billina both bowled and batted under the critical eyes of several men who were flannelled but not fools.

"Where did she learn that stroke?" asked Ginger, when Billina made three forcing shots in succession.

"The Heatherfields," replied Grace, "are

Ginger accepted defeat like a sportsman. He shook hands with the victrix and congratulated her.

as mad about cricket as we are. They have a pro. of their own."

"She's a little wonder," said Ginger.

Before dinner, during dinner, and after dinner, bets were registered. The sums wagered were insignificant, but more than money was at stake. Billina retired early to bed with the other girls. The men sat up late. To them the morrow's match was not to be taken seriously. Ginger, it was remarked afterwards, smoked three of the Colonel's biggest cigars and drank three whiskies-and-soda. He listened, rather moodily, to the chatter, thinking of Grace. She had not been too kind to him; he had detected a frosty indifference unreasonably alien to her.

Was there another man?

This dismal possibility—and nothing else—made him refill his tumbler and light another cigar. "Daddy," as usual, was jawing about cricket. He announced presently that the "glass" was falling!

"If we have rain —— ?"

A spirit of contrariety took possession of a youthful baronet.

"If we do, sir, let us play, rain or shine. Are we made of sugar? Golfers don't knock off when it rains."

"My dear boy, think of the pitch."

"Oh, hang the pitch!"

This was rank blasphemy. Worse followed.

"Cricket is becoming senile; too many drawn matches. If I had my way, I'd widen and heighten the wickets, or cut down the width of the bat."

"Good Lord!"

"Yes; I'd put some snap into the game. I think I shall chuck cricket after this season. As for the match to-morrow, I vote we let the girls win, poor little dears!"

The Colonel was aghast.

"If Grace heard you, George, she'd never speak to you again."

The other men supported their host, staring astounded at a traitor. Ginger drained his glass, glanced at his watch, bade the company "good night," and made a lamentable exit.

"Badly pipped," was the judgment passed on him.

"Fellow must be mad," growled the Colonel.

VII.

THE COLONEL'S barometer was not to be trusted. Grace, indeed, when a small girl, had propounded a riddle: "What goes up when the rain comes down?" The Colonel replied: "Umbrellas." Grace riposted: "No—your glass, Daddy."

On the morrow a July sun swam lazily in azure and stainless skies. The Colonel, after careful inspection of the pitch, decided that it was a batsman's wicket. Nevertheless, Grace, after winning the toss, elected to put in the men.

"You're a fool, child," snapped her father.

"I don't get all my wits from you, dearest," said Grace, sweetly.

"Well, I blame your poor mother for this."

Even Ginger protested.

"It will be a sweltering day, Grace."

"I hope so."

"If you love leather-hunting——"

"I have this in common with you: I love having my own way."

She led ten good girls and true into the field, little knowing that one was a boy. The men brandished the broomsticks, serviceable weapons made for the purpose, bound like bats and spliced. Grace had made her plans, but she led Billina aside.

"We must establish a rot, if we can, from the start. You send down your teasers. Place the field."

Billina did so.

As Grace had foreseen, the two batsmen who had watched Billina bowling easy balls of a decent length at the nets were not anticipating anything else. And, as every cricketer knows, it is not easy to play oneself comfortably "in" with a broomstick. More, Ginger had instructed his henchmen to make runs quickly, and to steal them whenever possible.

The first ball was a wide; the second ball as it left the bowler's hand seemed to be exactly like the first, but it broke back sharply. The confounded batsman flicked at it too late and was caught in the slips. Derisive cheers greeted him on his way to the pavilion. His successor, however, was more careful. Billina bowled a maiden over. Grace, at the other end, sent down easy stuff deliberately, encouraging the enemy to smite at the ball, which travelled twice to the boundary. The last ball of her over was hit hard and stopped miraculously by Billina at cover point. Ginger muttered to the Colonel:—

"Never in my life have I seen a girl field a ball like that."

"A Royal in petticoats!"

Billina's second over captured another wicket. A discomfited Etonian remarked to Butterfingers:—

"How the devil does she do it?"

"Ask me something easier."

Close to the pavilion, the Etonian met Ginger.

"She's a bally conjurer with the ball," he remarked, mournfully.

Ginger strode on, drawing on his gloves. Back of his mind lay the conviction that Miss Billina Heatherfield was lucky. He refused to believe in her skill. This conviction was confirmed as he played back to her a perfectly straight, good-length ball.

Over.

Obviously, the other batsman wanted to stay at his own end. Three "two's" in succession were added to the score; and then Ginger stood up to receive Billina's second ball.

It bowled him clean!

He lifted his cap to her, as he turned from contemplating his shattered wicket. The ball had swerved late as it left clever fingers, curving inward from the off; then it had kicked in to the leg stump. To comfort him, Butterfingers remarked genially:—

"That might have defeated Jack Hobbs."

"Thank you," said Ginger, politely.

He was feeling sore, although he didn't show it to the jubilant Colonel, whose eye rested paternally upon Billina.

"I wish she were my girl——!"

"I'm beginning to wish she were mine," said Ginger.

The Colonel was visibly impressed.

What followed may be set down in a few words. Long before the luncheon hour the Broomsticks were dismissed (or dispatched) for a first innings of forty-nine runs, half of which were stolen. There was

He lifted his cap to her, as he turned from contemplating his shattered wicket.

no exciting leather-hunting till Billina went in to bat. Then she and Grace formed a happy partnership which lasted for an hour. During that hour—luncheon was served at half-past one—Ginger's suspicions were aroused. Grace noted with chagrin that her lover's eyes rested continuously upon Billina. He applauded all her best strokes. Once, at a critical moment, Billina cut a ball hard into his hands. Ginger dropped too hot a catch.

Did he do it deliberately?

At three in the afternoon the Broomsticks began their second innings. They had to make ninety-nine runs to save a single innings' defeat.

They failed to do it. The spectators howled themselves hoarse. Four stalwart maidens carried Billina off the field.

The Colonel kissed her *coram publico!*

Ginger disappeared.

VIII.

HE sought and found his trusty man-servant.

"You saw the match, Wakeling?"

"Yes, Sir George."

"It was wangled. I'm almost sure that Miss Billina Heatherfield is a boy."

Wakeling gasped.

"If you say so, Sir George, it must be so. What a game!"

"Quite. Not yet played to a finish. How can we get proof? You are a man of resource, Wakeling. I must weigh in at tea. Whilst I'm at tea, you must make a reconnaissance. It is possible that the maid who waited on Miss Billina Heatherfield shares my suspicions of her sex. If the coast is clear, you might find a clue in the young gentleman's bedroom——"

"Demeaning work, Sir George, if the young gentleman is a young lady."

"You take it from me, he isn't. What does a boy do when he has nothing to do? He shoves his hands into his trouser pockets. Three times I saw Miss Billina Heatherfield attempt to shove her hands into pockets which weren't there. Does a young lady wipe a too moist forehead with her fingers? Never! She uses a hanky. Lastly, have you ever seen a girl swig off at one go a large tumbler of shandygaff?"

Wakeling said, solemnly:—

"You can count on me, Sir George, to do what I can."

Ginger returned to the tea tent and paid marked attentions to Billina.

Wakeling was waiting for him when he went upstairs to dress for dinner.

"She," declared Wakeling, in no uncertain tones, "is a He."

"How do you know? We must know for certain before I act."

"I sneaked into her, *his* room. The other servants were downstairs having their tea. Under the bed was a suit-case. Young gentlemen are very careless. I found the key of the suit-case under some pocket-handkerchiefs. I took the liberty of opening the suit-case, Sir George."

"Quite justifiable in the circumstances."

"The suit-case is full of a young gentleman's clothes, everything that might be needed for a week-end visit."

"Good! At dinner, or after dinner, when you can snatch the opportunity, you will take that suit-case and place it under my bed. Twig?"

Wakeling smiled discreetly.

Ginger managed to sit next Miss Billina at dinner; and he positively overwhelmed her with attentions—and questions, awkward questions. Both the Colonel and Grace were glaring at him, but he alone at the big table seemed unaware of this.

"I want to give you a hat," he said, in a loud voice.

"What for?"

"Because you so nearly achieved the hat-trick. Tell me, where do you buy your hats?"

Billina said demurely:—

"Mummy buys my hats. I—I have too many hats."

"Really? You're the first girl I ever met who had too many hats. Still, perhaps you would prefer——"

"I should prefer a new tennis racket."

"You shall have it."

"That's jolly decent of you."

In the pause that followed Buster blushed. Ginger was gently pressing her foot under the table. An audacious boy returned the pressure. Evidently wicked baronets did these things, even when they were half engaged to another girl! As Grace's potential brother-in-law, Buster waxed indignant. He decided to tell Butterfingers. Tangle-toes was not cricket. Sweetly dissembling, and not withdrawing his foot, as he ought to have done, Miss Billina whispered brazenly:—

"There is a moon to-night."

"Let's make it a honeymoon."

Miss Billina withdrew her foot.

IX.

WHILST the men were sipping the Colonel's vintage port, Buster and Butterfingers took a squint at the moon, which silvered delightfully the Colonel's water garden. Butterfingers, being a loyal little soul, refused at first to believe a shocking tale.

"He did *this*," said Miss Billina, "I take my Sam he did."

"I won't have it. How dare you?"

"I only wanted to show you *what* he did."

"If Grace had seen him——! Buster—this is awful. I could cry like a child. I shall tell her, but she won't believe such rank treachery. How can I make her believe?"

"Seeing is believing. If——"

"Yes. Go on."

"If you went back to the drawing-room and left me here, Ginger, with a hint from you, will join me. Then Grace and you could join us. Standing behind that hedge, Grace might tumble to what sort of a rotter he really is. But I rather funk it."

"You will smack his face if——"

"You bet! Good and hard. But where do I come in if I do this?"

"You want to haggle?"

"Darling Butterfingers, I adore you. I want—you—you—you. You like me, don't you? I came here for your sake. Haven't I made good?"

"You silly child!"

"I'm eighteen and so are you."

He took her hand in his.

He kissed her.

Butterfingers returned his kiss. Then she spoke with finality:—

"Now, Buster, be good. Consider yourself paid in full. Really and truly I've kissed Miss Billina, not Master Buster Heatherfield. We are tremendous pals, neither more nor less. I'm sure that I shall be ashamed of myself when I see you in your right kit. Pals, I repeat, we are. Leave it at that."

"Right-o!" sighed Buster.

Butterfingers jumped up.

"I shall pop off."

She flitted away. The *amorini*, guarding the lily pool, winked at each other. They were almost giggling when Ginger slipped through the cypress hedge and sat down beside a very nervous but cheeky boy.

"Darling——!"

"Oh-h-h!"

"I knew I should find you here, waiting for me."

"Be good," panted Buster, imitating the tones of Butterfingers.

For answer the stalwart Ginger pinned Buster's arms to his ribs, lifted him up, and kissed him furiously.

"You—Beast!"

"You Beauty!"

Alas! Poor Buster! He wriggled and squirmed in vain, hugged and squashed into impotence. Beside himself with humiliation, he stammered out:—

"Lemme go. I'm—I'm a man, not a silly girl, you blighter."

Ginger laughed. Then the crowning indignity came to pass. Miss Billina, in flowered chiffon that wilts beneath hard usage, was laid across Ginger's knees and—soundly smacked.

At this moment Grace stepped from behind the hedge, followed by Butterfingers. Ginger released Miss Billina, who fled. Butterfingers, guessing the truth, raced after him.

"You unutterable cad," said Grace, bitingly.

Obviously, she had seen but had not heard. Ginger grinned at her.

"What an escape I've had!"

"Softly—softly. Oh, Gracie—how could you do it? And I counted you the most honourable of women——"

"Heavens! What have *I* done?"

"You have not played cricket. Personally, I was willing to make you a present of this match. But—to win it by fraud——! Dis—graceful!"

"Are you quite mad?"

"I shall limp to the grave; you have pulled my leg out of all shape, but possibly yours is paining you a little."

"You are mad."

"Only with love for you, darling. Forgive me. I believed you guilty of a most heinous offence. You are innocent. With whom, do you think, was I struggling just now?"

"With Betty's sister."

"With Betty's *brother*."

"I had not the remotest idea of it."

"I spotted him as a boy this afternoon."

"Ginger——!"

"The punishment fitted the crime. Let us forgive and forget, but I want to say something, to get it off my chest. You take cricket too seriously."

"You say that?"

"I do. It's the greatest game in the world, but it is a game. I have work to do; and I mean to do it. Will you help me to do it, you dear woman?"

She smiled at him.

BEFORE they returned to the drawing-room, Grace said confidently:—

"That naughty boy must get out of his sister's clothes before more mischief is done."

"Then he will have to hide himself in bed."

"Why?"

"Because I have his kit; and I shall keep it from him till he apologizes on bended knee to both of us."

Buster had to do it, amid roars of laughter.

A QUIET DAY

By

WILLIAM FREEMAN

Illustrated by
D. L. GHILCHIK

THERE is a room in the Excelsis Club which Mr. Harold Simcoe never enters, though as a member of the club he has every right to be there. It is the library, and silence must be maintained within its walls. Notices to that effect are displayed on all four of them.

Mr. Simcoe was a bachelor of fifty-two, a retired saddler who took an out-size in waistcoats, had to be careful about his aspirates and his liver, and got put up for the Excelsis at a time when it was worried about a heavy drop in membership. It was an old-established club to which a certain amount of social distinction still clung: the ideal spiritual home, he decided, for a man with social ambitions.

For the first two or three visits after his election Mr. Simcoe comported himself in a meek, not to say awestricken, manner. The rooms were vast and luxuriously furnished. The liveried servants were respectful and entirely equal to their jobs; compared with Mrs. Biggins, his housekeeper, they were the last word in plutocratic efficiency. All of which went to Mr. Simcoe's head. He was not an aristocrat either by birth or by training; he was not even one of Nature's gentlemen. He became aggressive, patronizing, and, in brief, a nuisance. But he committed no definite crime until the day when he decided to bestow the light of his presence in the library.

Books, with a few exceptions, did not appeal to him. They tended to collect dust. They led to much waste of time. He had merely had glimpses of the room when other people had opened the swing door as he was passing. But this morning, rather more conscious of his dignity than usual, he went in.

Now, if a man enters a library, he must obviously consult at least one book there. Mr. Simcoe crossed to the nearest shelf, to see, so to speak, what the club was prepared to offer him this morning. A bulky volume caught his eye, and he stood on tiptoe to take it down. It was heavier than he had imagined; it slid through his podgy fingers, hitting him fairly between the eyes and knocking his pince-nez to the ground.

Mr. Simcoe, breathless and half-stunned, exploded in a heartfelt "Damn!"

There were eleven other people in the library. From nine of these rose an indignant "Sh-h-h!" The other two were asleep.

"'Sh' yourself!" retorted Mr. Simcoe, still more exasperated at the discovery that one of the lenses of his pince-nez was broken.

The assistant librarian approached.

"I must remind you, sir——"

"You 'old—I mean hold—your tongue!" Mr. Simcoe's voice rose fiercely. Blood was trickling from a cut on his nose. He retrieved the broken glasses. "I don't need any reminding that I'm a member of this club, and that you're paid by me and the other members of the club to get on with your job!"

Two young men who had been writing at a table glanced at one another, and simultaneously rose to their feet. They approached Mr. Simcoe; gently but irresistibly they swept him towards the door, opened it, and steered him through.

Mr. Simcoe, more infuriated than ever, summarized his views on dunderheaded nincompoops who laid themselves open to a charge of assault and battery.

"We are sorry," said the taller of the two young men. He had auburn-tinted hair and

an ingratiating smile. "But you rendered such a step necessary. In the interests of the club——"

"I'll—I'll report your infernal insolence to the committee——"

"Which committee?" inquired the shorter young man. He was dark and slight, and wore a monocle with a broad black ribbon.

Mr. Simcoe, dabbing his wound, glared at him, but did not answer.

"My friend Lord Putney put the question," interpolated the auburn-haired man, "because we ourselves happen to be members of the executive of the Vigilance Committee."

"Then teach fools like that librarian-chap in there to mind his own business." Mr. Simcoe's indignation had not subsided. But he was visibly impressed.

"What you hardly appear to grasp," said Lord Putney, "and what Sir Arthur Sporran and myself wish to point out, is that it is *you* who have broken the rules."

"Rot!" said Mr. Simcoe, uneasily. "A mere 'ectic word or so in the 'eat of the moment——"

Sir Arthur shook his head.

"The Expulsion Committee are hardly likely to take that view, when we make our report."

The volume slid through his fingers, hitting him fairly between the eyes.

"You're not bound to make it."

"We should be failing in our duty if we didn't," said Sir Arthur. He glanced at Lord Putney. "There's the alternative, of course—eh, George?"

"Quite," said Lord Putney, swinging his monocle.

"S'pose you mean a letter of apology?" said Mr. Simcoe. "Well, I'd concede that, though it'd go against the grain."

"Unfortunately the club, in a case like this, hasn't any use for apologies," said Sir Arthur. "The alternative I referred to is rather in the nature of a penance."

"How?"

"The offending member has to remain on the club premises for six consecutive hours."

"Five, for the first offence," corrected Lord Putney, gently.

"True. I'd forgotten."

"You haven't told me yet what I'm expected to *do* in the five hours," said Mr. Simcoe, irritably.

"Maintain a complete and unbroken silence from ten o'clock till three," said Sir Arthur.

"Pooh! Nothing in that!"

"Glad to see you taking it in that spirit," said Lord Putney.

"Better hand him the badge, hadn't we?" said Sir Arthur.

Lord Putney nodded, and took from his pocket an enamelled badge,

a green shield in the centre of which was a large gilt "S."

"You will insert this in your coat, and wear it throughout the five hours," he said. "You will probably see other members wearing it, others who are undergoing the penance."

"Makes one feel a bit of a mug, what?" said Mr. Simcoe. "Like a kid being punished in front of the class."

"Life *is* a class," said Lord Putney, gravely. "A class in which one learns many bitter lessons. Remember that, whatever happens, absolute silence must be maintained. Even a whispered syllable would lead to a report, and expulsion. You remember Jimmy Quondell's case, Arthur?"

Sir Arthur nodded.

"Yes. And that appalling little bounder from Guiana? Both of them, Mr. Simcoe, made the mistake of imagining that they wouldn't be overheard. In point of fact, a member of the committee is invariably within earshot. And now we must leave you. Come, Arthur."

"Good morning," said Sir Arthur.

"And good luck," added Lord Putney, courteously.

Mr. Simcoe left the club earlier than usual that afternoon. The atmosphere of the place suffocated him. His one longing was to be in a building where he could talk in any room as much and as loudly as he pleased.

ON his way home he met Parkson. Parkson, whose phenomenal luck in rubber shares had made him independent ten years before Simcoe had retired, belonged to several clubs, and knew a good deal more about club life than his friend. Simcoe, without descending to the humiliating details, made a few tactful inquiries. Yes, said Parkson, most clubs had silence rooms. Quite the usual thing, in fact. If a chap was fool enough to break any of the rules, the committee generally reminded him of the fact. One wasn't necessarily expelled, but—yes, one might call it doing penance.

Simcoe left it at that. He hadn't really expected to derive much consolation from Parkson, who was a dyspeptic pessimist with no real understanding of other people's moods.

He returned to his suburban villa. He had christened it "The End House," which it certainly was when he bought it. When others had sprung up beyond it, he had altered the name to "Amnesia," though he wasn't quite sure whether the word was the name of a flower or a heathen goddess. Mrs. Biggins, his housekeeper, was one of those small women with an extraordinarily fluent tongue. She had all sorts of things to tell him, and she insisted on telling them. He wondered what sort of action the club would have taken in *her* case.

He slept badly that night, and his dreams were all of the wrong kind. His nerves were so jumpy when he dressed in the morning that he twice succeeded in cutting himself with his safety-razor. Rain was falling in a monotonous downpour when he set out for the station. Mr. Simcoe's spirits were definitely subnormal by the time he reached the club.

The two members of the committee were waiting for him. They nodded a greeting, followed him to the cloak-room, and waited while he disposed of his hat and waterproof, and with unsteady fingers inserted the enamelled badge in the lapel of his coat. Lord Putney beckoned him on one side.

"You are two minutes late," he reproved him, in a low voice. "But that, of course, can be adjusted. My duty is to remind you again of the terms of the penance."

Mr. Simcoe raised his eyebrows inquiringly, and made movements with the forefinger of his right hand against the palm of his left.

"Yes, you may write. I ought to have mentioned that before. But not more than six times in the course of the day. Lastly, remember that the one room which is absolutely forbidden during the next five hours is the library. Poetic justice, and so on. You'll have all the rest of the club to amuse yourself in. Good-bye."

He walked away.

Mr. Simcoe had a sudden sense of acute and dreadful isolation. He went slowly up the wide stairs to the smoking-room. It was too early in the day for the place to be crowded; he could efface himself for an hour or so in that atmosphere of gossip, cigarette-smoke, and newspapers. He annexed a couple of periodicals from the rack, found a comfortable arm-chair, and sat down.

An elderly member dozed in the chair on his right; on his left was an unoccupied chair. To this came a young, worried-looking man for whom at first Mr. Simcoe felt a vague sympathy. Presently he leant sideways, and spoke.

"Excuse me, sir, but can you tell me when the doors are opened?"

Mr. Simcoe's lips framed themselves to ask, "What doors?" But he checked himself in time.

"The fact is," continued the worried young man, apologetically, "I mislaid my notice, and—— Not ill, or anything, are you?"

Mr. Simcoe shook his head, and put a finger to his lips.

"*Dumb?*" said the young man.

Mr. Simcoe, grateful for the avenue of escape, nodded assent.

"By Jove, that's extraordinary! What I mean is, seeing your position——"

Mr. Simcoe cast aside his periodicals, heaved himself out of his chair, and moved away. He had no longer any sympathy whatever with the worried young man.

The room was lit by three windows, and under each of these was a writing-table equipped with ink, pens, and stationery. He went across to the nearest table and sat down. He could at least fill in half an hour or so letter-writing. Or, at any rate, pretending to write letters. One wasn't likely to be disturbed when——

"Sorry to interrupt"—a member he hadn't seen before, all smiles and glittering pince-nez, was at his elbow—"but *is* there such a thing as a decent pen among your collection? Mine are the kind that would drive a Balliol man into splitting infinitives!"

Mr. Simcoe shook his head.

"But, hang it all——!"

Mr. Simcoe, with a fierce gesture, indicated his renunciation of every pen on the tray.

"Oh, all right. If you won't answer a civil question——"

Mr. Simcoe took a pen and wrote: "*I CAN'T. Now do you understand?*" and flung the pen down again.

The young man snatched up the pen again, and wrote:—

"*Sorry, but I don't. Do you mean you're dumb?*"

Mr. Simcoe wrote: "*Practically.*" Then, because the situation was becoming absolutely intolerable, he began to move away.

"Wait," said the member with the pince-nez, eagerly. "I may be able to help you. Especially if it's just one of those temporary attacks that are getting so prevalent nowadays. My name, in case you don't know it, is Wimbleford—Professor Erasmus Wimbleford. This sort of thing is rather a hobby—a speciality, if I may say so—of mine. Let's get a couple of seats in a quiet corner, and talk things over."

Mr. Simcoe, his heart seething with bitter hatred for interfering deaf-and-dumb specialists, wrote: "*Don't want to.*"

"None of them do," said the Professor. "It's one of the recognized symptoms. But you must try to overcome the tendency—a word at a time, beginning with the simplest monosyllables. 'No,' for instance. Fix your eyes on my lips, and make——"

But Mr. Simcoe was already making for the door.

Outside he paused for a moment to see if he was being followed. He wasn't. He looked at his watch. The time was seven minutes to eleven. Less than an hour out of his penance had expired. He went downstairs, and for a time wandered unhappily about in the hall and corridors. There, at any rate, he reflected bitterly, he was inconspicuous and unmolested.

A page-boy came along, calling his name. Simcoe stopped him with a gesture.

"Mr. 'Arold Simcoe? Wanted on the 'phone, sir."

Simcoe walked irresolutely as far as the telephone-room, with its row of call-boxes, glanced in—and came away again. The girl in charge of the private exchange might volunteer the name of the man who'd rung him up, but there'd be no gain in that if he couldn't reply. His unknown caller must remain anonymous.

He spun out another three-quarters of an hour in the club's corridors. Whenever he met anyone who looked like speaking, he retreated. Fortunately they were not many. Mr. Simcoe's expression was not that of one who yearns for the companionship of his fellow-men. Several times he caught sight of Lord Putney or Sir Arthur. Neither appeared to be aware of his existence.

TWELVE O'CLOCK brought the possibilities of respite. From that hour until three the grill-room would be available. The Excelsis *chef* prides himself on providing the best three-and-sixpenny table d'hôte luncheon of its kind in town. One simply goes to one of the many little tables and sits down. There is no need to order anything. The whole system might have been devised to meet Mr. Simcoe's peculiar necessities.

When he entered the room there were plenty of tables to choose from. He selected one in an inconspicuous corner. A waiter came, and said: "The luncheon, sir?" and Mr. Simcoe nodded. He had bought a paper at the club bookstall by the simple process of throwing down twopence and picking up the first periodical that came handy. He now immersed himself in it, as an additional hint that he didn't want to be disturbed.

The soup came, and was consumed. The fish came, and was likewise consumed. He read on, until the creaking of a chair roused him. Someone was taking the opposite seat. A voice, very bright and cheerful, came from the other side of Mr. Simcoe's paper rampart.

"Isn't that the current number of the *Blue Weekly* you're reading, sir?"

Mr. Simcoe gripped the paper rather more tightly, but made no other sign.

"There's an article there," continued the voice, "on 'Should Wives be Chastised?' Rather fantastic in treatment, but quite convincing as far as it goes."

Mr. Simcoe, half his lunch still to be eaten, realized that something must be done, and at once. He drew out his notebook, wrote on one of the leaves, "*I am stone-deaf*," and pushed the leaf across.

"Stone-deaf?" said the new-comer. He was a man who looked so like an actor that it would be safe to assume that he was entirely unconnected with the stage. "Then how the blazes did you know I was talking, since you couldn't see my face?"

Mr. Simcoe perceived that he had dropped a brick of the first magnitude.

"Are you stone-dumb, too?" added the man.

Mr. Simcoe nodded.

"Maybe you'll recover your speech as easily as you've recovered your hearing! Let's experiment." He slid out his left foot and brought the heel down smartly on Mr. Simcoe's right toe.

Mr. Simcoe's features contracted in agony. If a glare could have slain, the membership of the Excelsis Club would have been reduced by one at that moment. But he made no sound.

"Hurt you?" said the man, regretfully. "Sorry. But you sort of asked for it, didn't you? Haven't spoilt your lunch, I hope?"

But he had. Mr. Simcoe rose from his seat, paid his three-and-six at the desk, and limped out of the grill-room to wander about the corridors again.

The club's notice-board caught his eye. A slip of paper had just been pinned there, stating that Sir Barnaby Wagstaff's address on 'What I Saw at Punkawallah' would take place in the large committee-room, on the second storey, at one-thirty. All members of the club who desired to be present were asked to be in their seats early, as accommodation was limited.

He slid out his left foot and brought the heel down smartly on Mr. Simcoe's right toe.

Why shouldn't he go? It would be an escape into an atmosphere in which the risk of conversation would be practically eliminated.

He made his way up *viâ* the stairs—not by the lift, because the boy would be certain to inquire what floor he wanted—to the second storey. He opened the glazed door and peered in. A temporary platform had been erected at one end; there were the usual rows of chairs. It was a room big enough to hold a couple of hundred people; he would be entirely inconspicuous in the crowd.

A few had already arrived. He dropped into the first seat that was handy.

Other members drifted in; by a quarter

past the place was practically full. A man, who was obviously of importance, and aware of the fact, came up to Simcoe and touched him on the shoulder.

"Excuse me, sir, but your place is on the platform." And when Simcoe shook his head vehemently: "Please take your place there. The committee will be really hurt otherwise."

Mr. Simcoe found this difficult to believe. The fellow was barking up the wrong tree. On the other hand, if he declined to budge, there might be enforced explanations. If they wanted him on the platform, why not there as well as anywhere else?

He sighed, surrendered his happy obscurity, and was duly escorted to the platform. Others, presumably of social importance, joined him there. Sir Barnaby Wagstaff arrived, and delivered his address on Punkawallah. The applause at the end was enthusiastic enough to rouse Mr. Simcoe from a pleasant doze.

The pompous man who had brought him on to the platform appeared at his side.

"You'll second the vote of thanks?" he whispered.

Mr. Simcoe shook his head.

"A mere formal sentence or two will be sufficient."

Mr. Simcoe shook his head again. With a flash of inspiration, he indicated his throat, and emitted a wheezy cough.

"A lozenge——" suggested the pompous man.

Mr. Simcoe accepted the pungent abomination he was offered.

"Always carry one or two," continued the man. "At a meeting of this sort, one never knows. All right now?"

Mr. Simcoe tried to indicate that the trouble was far too deep-seated to be eliminated by even the most powerful lozenges. He patted his chest and the lower portions of his waistcoat. The pompous man became more and more regretful.

Mr. Simcoe's unfortunate interior was still the subject of a one-sided discussion when the vote of thanks was proposed. It ended in the usual storm of hand-clapping.

"A dozen words will be enough," urged the pompous one, effacing himself deftly.

Mr. Simcoe realized with dull fury that all his wheezing and chest-slapping had been sheer waste of time, that he was expected to act as seconder after all. Well, if they wouldn't let him off on the strength of a cough, he'd see what acute illness would do. Doubled up, as with an attack of cholera, he made a sudden dash for the three steps that led from the platform, plunged down them, and, watched by pitying and curious eyes, stumbled out on to the landing again.

THERE was a clock there; as he straightened himself and glanced up, he saw that the hands stood at two minutes to three. His five hours' penance was almost at an end. Heavens, what a five hours! But when it was all over——

One of the club attendants approached.

"Mr. Harold Simcoe?"

He nodded uneasily.

"The secretary would be glad if you could spare him a few minutes in his office, sir."

Mr. Simcoe nodded again.

"As soon as possible," added the attendant.

Mr. Simcoe moved at a snail's pace towards the secretarial office. Lord Putney and Sir Arthur, chatting together a few yards away, watched him go.

"Got my message?" inquired the secretary, briskly. He was, in his way, a great man: men of that kind are needed to run a club as big as the Excelsis as successfully as the Excelsis is run. "Excellent. Sit down. Quite a pleasant day, after all."

Mr. Simcoe sat down. But he didn't discuss the weather. His eyes were glued on the clock on the mantelpiece. The minute hand was just, but only just, past the hour.

"I asked you to come and see me," continued the secretary, "because of certain ridiculous rumours which appear to be in circulation. Ridiculous and preposterous rumours."

He glanced at his visitor, as if anticipating a question. But Mr. Simcoe's attention was still focused on the clock.

"The rumours," resumed the secretary, "concern yourself. Various members have come to me within the last few hours with stories of behaviour which, if they are true, I find difficult to——" He broke off, following Simcoe's glance. "Confound that clock, it's stopped again. Five minutes past is what I make it."

Mr. Simcoe drew a deep breath.

"Thank Heaven!"

"What for?"

"That I can speak at last."

The secretary regarded him with a puzzled frown.

"Has there been any specific reason why you couldn't speak before?"

"Any specific reason—when for five hours I've been in the hands of your infernal Penance Committee!"

"My infernal *what?*"

"The Penance Committee."

"I wasn't aware that such a thing existed." The secretary was now leaning forward. His left hand was near the bell on his desk; his right toyed with a heavy

Mr. Simcoe cut them both dead.

ebony ruler. He spoke kindly, soothingly. "What did they make you do ? "

Mr. Simcoe told him.

"And you believed these young men ? "

"Of course.'

"And who did you say they were ? "

"Lord Putney and Sir Arthur Sporran."

"We have no such names on the club register. Can you describe their appearance ? "

Mr. Simcoe described them with a bitter attention to detail

"H'm ! " said the secretary. "Really ? A monocle on a broad black ribbon ? Quite so—I am beginning to understand. And no doubt they passed the word along to their friends." He leaned forward. "You mentioned a badge, but I didn't observe before that you were still wearing it, and that it was a steward's."

"A what ? "

"One of those issued temporarily to members who have been allotted a prominent part in any of our club functions. They are not always returned as soon as they should be. Mr. Scott-Barnes, I believe, has had one in his possession for several weeks."

Mr. Simcoe's grip tightened on the arms of his chair.

"Has Mr. Scott-Barnes red hair ? "

"Er—auburn," admitted the secretary.

Mr. Simcoe, leaving the room five minutes later, passed Lord Putney and his friend in the corridor. They conveyed an impression of fatigue, the fatigue of men who have laughed so much and so long that any further humour would be completely wasted on them. They glanced at him questioningly.

Mr. Simcoe cut them both dead.

THESE THRILLING ARTICLES ARE FACT—NOT FICTION.

Cases from My Crime-Book

By

H. ASHTON-WOLFE

(Interpreter at the Criminal Courts.)

Illustrated by
F. E. HILEY

AUTHOR'S NOTE

My profession as interpreter has brought me constantly in touch with the great criminal investigation centres of the world, and I have many times become intimate with some of the more interesting criminals of modern times.

The stories which I have selected for this series can be found in the official records, only one or two details having been rearranged in order to avoid giving pain and reopening old wounds.

I have myself taken part either in the investigation or the final trials of the criminals. Several of the cases I have specially selected because of the ingenuity displayed both by the law-breakers and by the investigators.

No. IV. ORSINI THE CROUPIER

IT was shortly after my initiation into the Sûreté—that brotherhood which, like a secret society, works unseen and undreamed of by the law-abiding citizen, but is quick to stretch out a muscular hand to grip the evildoer—that I first encountered Giulio Orsini, the dreamer and fanatic, and the galaxy of fantastic creatures who followed him, believing him to be the "Open Sesame" to easily-acquired riches.

Monte Carlo attracts queer people, perhaps the queerest in the world. A walk through the crowded gambling rooms will convince anyone of that. Every few minutes the eye is caught by some freakish man or woman, who appears all the more incongruous among the many well-dressed people amusing themselves by risking a handful of gold louis for fun. The men, one realizes, are obsessed by the belief that some day they will be able to grasp in their quivering hands the huge bundles of bank-notes that are so tantalizingly near. The women are generally those poor creatures who belong nowhere and to no one, and who seek to steep themselves in the evil excitement of the gambling passion in order to escape the grey monotony of solitude. Then there are those whose belief in a winning system is unshakable. None of these are casual players—they are *habitués* possessed by a monomania, as a drug-taker is possessed by the craving for his daily dose of poison.

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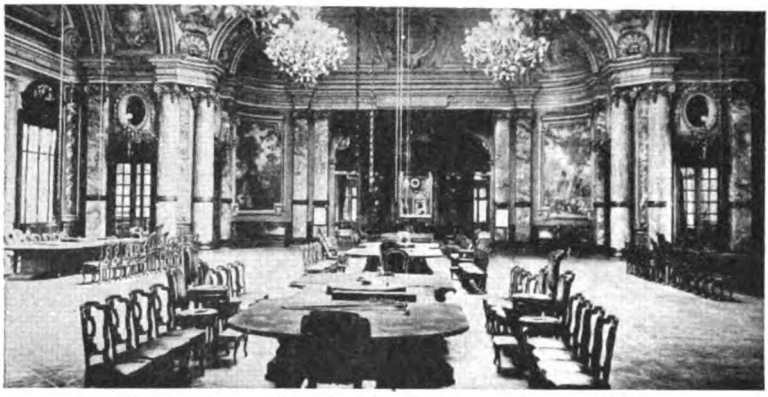


The roulette tables in the Casino at Monte Carlo.

At first I used to wonder why, adjoining the railway station, there was a huge lift to carry people from the level of the trains to the path leading to the "rooms," for it is only a walk of some fifty short steps. But when I saw travellers arrive from some far-away country—Russia, Germany, or Austria—who had actually washed and dressed themselves in the train after their long journey in order to be ready to enter the Casino at once, before even going to an hotel, I understood! The lift saved them almost a minute! They could enter the gambling rooms sixty seconds sooner than if they had walked!

Is it to be wondered at, then, that such types saw in Giulio Orsini a key wherewith to unlock the gate leading to their Mecca? Orsini had been a croupier in Monte Carlo for fifteen years. Several times his superiors had offered to promote him to the position of *chef de partie*, where he would be in charge of a table, with nothing to do but to watch that the game went on according to rules and regulations, and to quell any lapse from quiet, orderly manners. But notwithstanding the increase in salary which he would have received, Orsini had always refused and requested to be allowed to remain a croupier.

Orsini was not a man who could pass unnoticed even in such a cosmopolitan and fantastic crowd as that which daily throngs the rooms. He was an Italian, born in Milan, and when I met him he was about forty years old. His burning black eyes, accentuating the extraordinary pallor of his long, narrow face, were uncanny. Whenever I saw him I instinctively looked for a hump between his shoulders. He was not a hunchback, but there was something about his appearance, his long arms and tapering, flexible white fingers, which created the impression that in some fashion the man cleverly hid a deformity. Probably it was the atmosphere emanating from his abnormal mind. Always I thought that Paganini, the marvellous legendary violinist, must have looked like the croupier. And this impression was justified, for Orsini came of a family of artistes, and it was indeed the violin which had first suggested his strange theory to him.

Orsini, as we later discovered, believed firmly that since the roulette wheel revolves in obedience to a pull of the fingers, and the little ivory ball is sent rolling in the opposite direction by the same hand, years of practice, day and night, would make the croupier a virtuoso of the roulette, able to control the wheel so perfectly that the ball would always lose its momentum after the desired lapse of time and drop into a certain section of the wheel. This theory Orsini carried into practice, and but for instant action on the part of the *surveillance* the Casino would have lost a huge fortune.

Few people know of or guess at the perfection of the Monte Carlo Sûreté. It is invisible, but omniscient and ever-present.

WHEN I came to Monte Carlo as a young man the Chief of the Sûreté was M. Blanchard, a dapper little Frenchman with merry blue eyes and unassuming ways, whom the casual observer would have taken for a successful shopkeeper or tradesman. I had no idea then how very necessary the *surveillance* was to the place, but soon after my *début* I saw one or two examples which convinced me that without it Monte Carlo would quickly become impossible.

One day I was strolling through the vast rooms watching the ever-changing crowds whom the gold lust had in its grip. Approaching one of the tables I became aware of my Chief standing there, busily stacking a pile of silver pieces on a number and excitedly calling to the croupier to place a louis, which had rolled away, on zero. He appeared so engrossed in the game that I thought he had not seen me. Zero came and M. Blanchard pocketed his thirty-five gold pieces with a great show of satisfaction. I was about to walk away when he called to me over his shoulder.

"Come and look; I am very lucky with this series," and, holding out a card on

which he inscribed the numbers as they came up, he pointed to them with his pencil. Then, when I bent to look, he said quickly in an undertone :—

"There is a curious trick being tried to-day ; watch the men I am going to stand next to."

The first one he thus designated was a well-dressed man, an Englishman apparently, standing at the opposite side of the table, and playing only with gold one hundred-franc pieces—*plaques*, they are called. Then he came back and stood for a moment behind a burly, bullet-headed German wearing huge spectacles, who was near the croupier spinning the wheel.

For some minutes nothing happened ; then, just as the ball rolled down, the German stooped and banged a five-franc piece on seventeen at the instant that the croupier announced "Seventeen wins."

His piece was, of course, knocked aside.

"Too late, monsieur," he was told ; but he did not seem to understand, and argued volubly in German, insisting angrily on being paid. Meanwhile another croupier had raked in the bank's winnings. There were three stakes covering seventeen. One was a *plaque* on the number *en plein*.

"Whose is the *plaque* ?" I heard the croupier ask. The Englishman on the other side immediately claimed it in broken French. Thereupon he received one hundred and seventy-five pounds. I looked at M. Blanchard, who signed to me to follow. Once outside he chuckled.

"Clever, isn't it ?"

I confessed that I did not yet see what was wrong.

"No—don't you ?" he said. "It is very simple ; those two are strangers to each other ; who would doubt it ? The German has been chosen for his sharp eyes, and he is quick, too. On the instant that the ball enters the compartment of the winning number, he slams down his five francs, covering it. He has already done the same thing at other tables. It is knocked off, and he is angry and makes a row. Naturally everyone looks at him. Under the silver coin he has cleverly hidden a *plaque*, and *that* the other man claims and it is paid, because at a table so covered with gold no one noticed that it was not there before the silver piece was put down. They have done this at five tables whilst I have watched them, and are about one thousand pounds to the good. Come along now ; we shall certainly see it tried again."

Giulio Orsini.

As M. Blanchard said, we were just in time to see the little comedy repeated once more at a table some distance away. An attendant was at once sent to request each man to follow him into the office. Here we confronted the two accomplices. Of course, they insisted that they did not know each other. Nevertheless, their cards were taken away and both were conducted to the frontier. They had not done so badly, however.

I tell this little anecdote to show how daily, constantly, the *surveillance* must watch in order to prevent trickery.

Then one morning I was informed that there was something very queer going on when Orsini was spinning the wheel. What it was M. Blanchard could not say. Orsini was a trusted *employé*, and although he was strange in his ways and inclined to solitary habits his conduct had always been exemplary. But for some days several roulette tables had been losing so heavily and so regularly that the *chef de partie* had reported it, because this only happened when Orsini was spinning. Nearly half a million francs had been paid to one man alone, a tall, lean American whose card bore the name of G. Marlow. But he was not the only one who was winning large sums. It was quite possible that this was merely due to luck, for gamblers are so superstitious that many will only play at one table ; and others again only when a certain croupier, whom they imagine to be lucky to them, is present. However, I was instructed to investigate.

It was the fashionable hour, after dinner, when I saw the American, Marlow, saunter into the room. His lean, hatchet face was cold and disdainful, and his grey eyes flickered with contempt from table to table. For a while he watched the excited, absorbed players, sitting round the green baize, stake their money. I saw him look long and searchingly at Orsini, who had just changed over from another part of the room.

The croupier did not appear to be in the least aware of his scrutiny, but with his usual absent-minded expression began his duties, drawling out the stereotyped "*Faites vos jeux.*". Suddenly I saw the American lean forward and throw a bundle of thousand-franc notes on Red, Uneven, and Passe. Four came up and he lost. Again I observed that he looked steadily, almost angrily, at the croupier; then he staked the maximum on the same hazards. Luck was with him now, and in a short time he had won a large sum. Others, seeing him win so regularly, staked with him. Then, when Orsini was relieved, the American gathered up his winnings and left. So far there had been nothing in the least irregular. Several people had won large sums; well—that happened every day, but would they continue to win?

To my surprise they did. Again the next evening Marlow began at once staking the maximum when Orsini arrived, and his example was soon followed by the same people who had imitated him the night before. At the end of three days I carried my report to M. Blanchard. I found him sitting at the Café de Paris. He was looking very worried, and his usual cheery smile was for once missing.

"Well," he queried, "have you anything to say worth listening to? I doubt it, for your colleagues say that they have nothing to report. Nothing irregular has been noticed."

"No, nothing irregular," I replied, "but I have seen some strange, very strange, coincidences."

At this my Chief looked startled—he guessed that my words held a deeper meaning. For a moment he searched my face, then without a word he paid for his drink and, rising, passed his arm through mine and led me away. We crossed to his office under the little covered arcade by the main entrance. Still without speaking he pushed a comfortable chair forward and motioned me to sit. Then, when he had cut and lighted a cigar, he turned to me.

"Now, *mon cher*, I hope you are not going to disappoint me. Tell me what you mean."

"Well—first," I answered, pulling out my note-book, "here is a list of the people who always play when Orsini spins. One is a charming little Italian girl named Gina Maiolani—she is from Venice. I noticed her because she is so pretty"—my Chief nodded sympathetically—"then there are two Englishmen and two Italians, and last, but not least, that American, Marlow. He always begins in the evening and the others follow his lead. But in the daytime the little girl often plays alone. Sometimes, however, she is joined by the two Italians. They never speak to each other in the rooms, although it would be quite natural if they did. But they know each other."

M. Blanchard leaned forward.

"How do you know?"

"I have seen them at Mentone together."

"Well, even that doesn't tell us why they win."

"No," I said, "but if you will come with me to-morrow I will tell you before they stake their money where they are going to place it."

M. Blanchard looked angry.

"If you know so much, then you had better tell me at once what the game is."

I shook my head. "I cannot yet; for I am not sure; that is why I would like to test it in your presence."

"Very well," he answered, curtly. "But I think it is sheer nonsense, for you are suggesting that the wheel can be controlled; and that you know is impossible."

THE next afternoon M. Blanchard met me in the Atrium. Together we entered and strolled from table to table. Suddenly I stopped. I had seen the girl, Gina Maiolani, come in. She went rapidly round the room and then approached the centre table, where Orsini had just sat down. For a few moments she played merely for small stakes, but I saw that she held a bundle of large notes in readiness. When I saw her lean forward I said to M. Blanchard: "Now she will stake on Red and Even." At the same moment the girl placed the maximum on red, and, handing some notes to a croupier, requested him to place them on Even on the other side of the board. Six times I gave the right information in advance of her movements. Then my Chief pulled me away. "How is it done?" he asked, fiercely, when we were outside.

"When Orsini closes his right hand, leaving no fingers showing, and scratches his nose with his left hand, it is Black and Even; when thumb and index are stretched out it is Uneven——"

M. Blanchard seized me roughly.

"Rubbish!" How can Orsini know in advance where the ball will roll? Is that all you have to tell me? It is impossible!"

"Nevertheless he does know. Test it again to-night," I replied.

That evening Marlow gambled heavily. In nearly every case the series of apparently innocent gestures, such as any man might make unconsciously, informed us in advance of the compartment in which the ball would come to rest. Only twice did it fail. M. Blanchard was forced to admit that the impossible had happened.

AFTER the rooms were closed that night the wheels were examined by experts. All were perfect. They then decided to change the little slips of metal forming the divisions between the numbers.

The Monte Carlo roulette wheels are made by a specialist and are the finest in the world. They are as true as human ingenuity and skill can make them. However, the dividing slips might just conceivably alter the poise the tiniest fraction. It was not only the fact that the bank was being cheated which troubled the administrators: the reputation for absolute fairness of the Casino games was at stake, for, of course, Orsini's skill was a double-edged knife. Chance only must rule the tables. The opinion of the Casino expert was that it was only the uncanny skill of the croupier which brought about such surprising results. The wheels had not been tampered with.

"This man is one in a million," he said. "He must have practised and practised and practised. He has hands so sensitive——" and an eloquent gesture concluded the sentence. "Now if to-morrow his confederates lose, we shall know for certain that the feel of the wheel, to which he is accustomed, has altered."

Gina Maiolani.

ANXIOUSLY enough we waited for the appearance of the American. The afternoon had worn away without any of the others coming to the tables. Probably they desired to avoid attracting attention. At about ten Marlow came in. With his usual air of cold detachment he stopped to watch the people before commencing to play. Then abruptly he threw down the full limit on all the hazards of four. For a second Orsini had placed his right hand, four fingers extended, on the board. Nineteen—the number next to four—came up, and the huge pile of money was raked in except for one small stake. Again and again this happened, and we saw a dull flush slowly creep to the cheeks of the croupier. The American's eyes had a hard glitter, and we could see the veins on his forehead swelling with anger, otherwise he gave no sign.

"A dangerous man, that one," said my Chief, as we walked away. "Well—you were right, and we have learned something; it is a valuable lesson. Orsini goes off duty at midnight. We will enter his lodging soon after he has gone home and see what is happening. There will be trouble, I'm afraid, when that thin American goes there."

"What will you do?" I asked curiously.

"What can we do? There is no law to punish Orsini—even could we prove anything—and we cannot. A judge would laugh at us. His services will no longer be required—he will be pensioned off. As a man I can sympathize with the poor devil. Think of the patient years of practice. It must have taken ten, twelve years — perhaps even more—to arrive at such perfection. He is mad. Of course, the others will no longer be allowed to enter the rooms. I am even grateful to Giulio Orsini, for now the wheels will be changed over every night to prevent such a thing from happening again. But what a temptation!" and my Chief sighed.

"There are other casinos," I suggested.

"Yes—and he may try elsewhere. Let them look out."

AT one in the morning we climbed the staircase to the Italian's lodging in the Condamine. A buzz of angry conversation reached us as we stood outside his door. Then suddenly a harsh, sneering voice said loudly in English:—

"Giulio, you're a fake—you can't do a thing—what do you say, boys? We keep what little we've won, and if the Dago there opens that fool mouth of his we'll shut it for good."

Several people replied indistinctly—then came a woman's clear voice speaking Italian, that of the pretty girl, Maiolani, with the Madonna face.

"No, no, my Giulio is no cheat. All his life he has worked—always, always; never does he sleep. He has cheated no one—not even the Cercle. They take your money if you lose, and laugh. They say 'Win if you can.' My Giulio can; he has proved it."

M. Blanchard looked at me and whispered:—

"You see—that is his point of view."

Then he knocked loudly on the door, and cried:—

"Open in the name of the law!"

Without waiting he turned the handle—the door was not locked—and we entered, leaving two of our men on guard outside.

In the centre of the room we saw a large table fitted with a roulette wheel identical with those in use at the Casino. Around this table some ten people were sitting. Several women were amongst them. At our entrance the girl Gina sprang up and ran to Orsini, throwing her arms about him with a sweet protective gesture. The American, Marlow, half rose, and his right hand sought a hip pocket.

"Do not draw a weapon, monsieur," Blanchard said, gravely. "Until now you have done nothing the law can punish you for, but if you do not instantly withdraw your hand—empty—I will have you arrested."

Reluctantly the man sat down and placed his hands on the table.

"Now," my Chief continued, "the signorina stated a moment ago quite truly that we throw down the gauntlet to all, and you, like so many others, have accepted the challenge. But we do not approve of your methods, and must therefore request you to leave the Principality to-morrow. You will take the first train to wherever you like; otherwise my men outside will conduct you to the frontier. You will also all give me your admission cards now, and leave this house at once. All but the young lady," he added as an afterthought. "I wish to speak with M. Orsini in private."

Crestfallen and cowed, the men and women filed out, handing their cards to one of the officers with us. At the door the American turned, white with rage.

"I'm Gene Marlow, Mister French Policeman, and don't forget it. I'll be even with you some day."

My Chief shrugged his shoulders and smiled. "There are others who have said the same thing. What does one more or less matter?"

When all had gone M. Blanchard shut the door and sat down.

"Now, Orsini," he began, "you have been with the Administration fifteen years. Why did you do this mad thing?"

In a torrent of speech the Italian told us his story.

HIS father had been an engraver, a great artiste—all his family were artistes. His uncle was a famous violinist. Once when as a boy he had admired the soft white hands of the musician, his uncle had said with a sigh, "*Si, si*—the hands, with practice they can do anything." These words came back to him when, on the death of his father, he gave up the engraver's art, learned from him, and entered the Casino. Always he had believed that hands like his own—long, supple, and sensitive—could develop a superhuman sense of touch.

"I could have become a great surgeon, but I had no money for study, and my mother was old and ill and needed sunshine, so I came to Monte Carlo and became a croupier."

The first year at the roulette wheel had given him the idea which now dominated him. He had obtained an exact replica of the wheels used in the Casino and practised every minute of his spare time when not on duty. Success had been long in coming; always the little lozenge-shaped obstacles on the rim upset his calculations, but little by little he overcame even this difficulty, until now he could nearly always so gauge the force exerted by his fingers that the ball would roll into the section he wished.

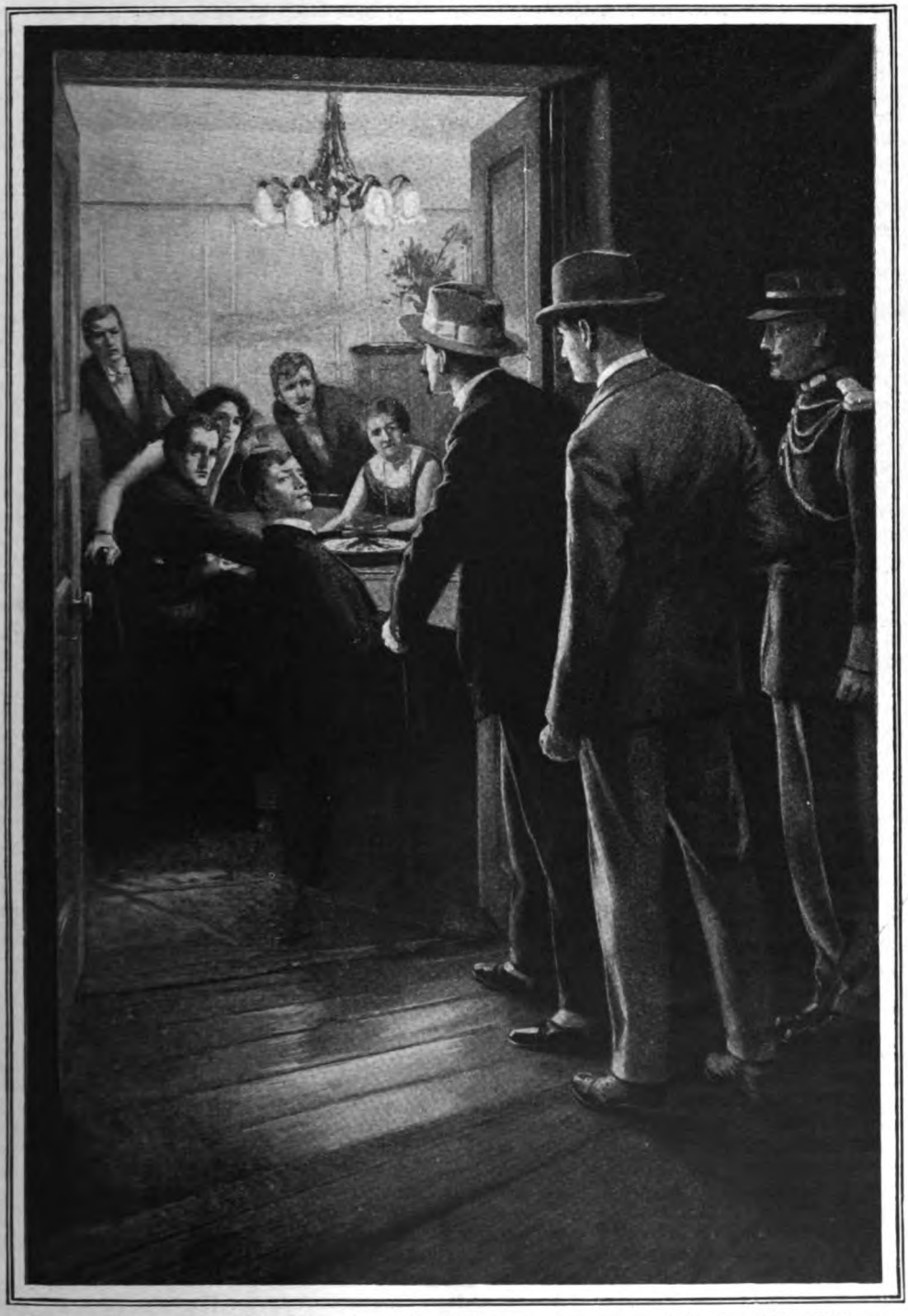
Blanchard was still incredulous, and there and then Orsini gave us a demonstration of his skill. He refused, however, to admit that what he had done was unfair. Upon this point his mind appeared warped. Again and again he insisted that it was perfectly fair. Had he not worked so hard, so hard, to arrive at perfection? Seeing all arguments useless, M. Blanchard rose.

"Of course," he said, "you realize that you can no longer be an *employé* of the Casino, in spite of the fact that we proved to you to-day that even your skill is unavailing, for the wheels can now be changed. However, we cannot allow anything but pure chance to reign in the rooms. The Administration will give you a pension in return for your many years' service, and you are free to remain in the country, as long as you promise not to attempt to corrupt anyone else. Luckily such hands and such patience as yours are very rare."

We left the man and his *fiancée* and returned to M. Blanchard's office.

The syndicate of cranks who had backed Orsini—for such, we were informed, it truly was, Marlow being its chief—all left the town in the morning. After a stormy interview with the directors, Orsini and the girl also left. We heard nothing further from them and believed that they had gone abroad. We were informed later that the Italian had attempted to obtain a post as croupier at San Remo—but the fact that he had suddenly left Monte Carlo appeared suspicious and they decided not to employ him.

Then suddenly one day an English lady named Edith Collins was found dead in her room at a well-known hotel. She had shot herself, and the little toy revolver which she had used was lying beside her on the bed.



M. Blanchard knocked loudly and cried: "Open in the name of the law!" Without waiting he turned the handle—the door was not locked—and we entered.

Suicides are now no longer common in Monte Carlo, but at that time they occurred now and then. The investigation proved her to have been seen often at the Casino, and she was entered in the register as one who came regularly. Strangely enough, she had not renewed her card of admission, which had expired two weeks before her death. Losses at the tables could not therefore have been the cause of her tragic end, except perhaps indirectly. Through her bank we discovered that she was married and that the husband lived in Paris. We communicated with him at once, but received no reply. Instead, the man himself arrived on the day following the suicide. He must have left, therefore, before receiving our communication. I was in the office when he was shown in. I saw that something even more serious than the tragedy must have occurred, as he actually stammered with rage.

" I allowed my wife to come here because she enjoyed a little fling at the tables, and because she was always reasonable," he shouted. " Now it appears that *tripots* (clandestine gambling rooms) exist here also; and your own croupiers own them. Read this." With a furious gesture he flung a letter on the table. It had been written by the unhappy woman and was in English. My Chief handed it to me. I read it through slowly and then translated the contents. It told us that a man calling himself Ricardo had approached the lady one day when she was losing, and suggested that she would do well to come to a private club, just opened, where the chances of winning were very much greater than elsewhere, since the zero, which rakes in all the money on the board, did not exist at their table except as an ordinary number. She had allowed herself to be tempted, and the first evening won a large sum. Encouraged by this she had continued to go there, but ever after she had lost heavily, until she was in such straits that she sold all her jewels and even forged her husband's signature to a large cheque. Then in despair she had killed herself. The address of the place was given and the description of the chief croupier left no doubt as to his identity. It was Orsini—fallen after his dismissal to trickery and cheating.

WE were certain that Gene Marlow was behind this scheme. The place was surrounded and raided, but no one was found on the premises. The news of the suicide of one of their victims had probably frightened them. A very strict watch was now kept, but the next attack against the Casino came in quite a different form.

I had often thought what unique opportunities large gambling rooms offered to counterfeiters, who could, before the bills were examined and found to be forgeries, change a large number at the tables with impunity. Others had evidently thought of this too, for unexpectedly one day several bundles of thousand-franc notes were returned from the bank and handed to the Sûreté. These were so perfectly imitated that only an expert could see the difference between the genuine and the forgeries. It was impossible for the busy croupiers to examine all the bank-notes they received, but every player handling such large notes was carefully watched. Thus by the elimination of the people quite above suspicion we arrived at three, two men and a woman. Even then it was quite possible that these people had actually received some of the forged notes from the croupiers, in the constant exchange of winnings and losses. But luck favoured us here, for late one evening a girl was ushered into the office under the stairs. It was the pretty Venetian, Gina Maiolani, although I hardly recognized her. Pale and thin, with eyes swollen with weeping, she was but a wraith of the winsome girl we had seen clinging desperately to the croupier.

With tears filling her eyes she sobbed out her pitiful story. Orsini had become the helpless tool of Gene Marlow. Completely subjugated by the strong personality of the American, he had not hesitated to stoop to crime. When the attempt made to fleece credulous gamblers had failed, because of the unexpected suicide of Edith Collins, they had all fled to Marseilles. Gina had accompanied her lover in the hope of tearing him from the grip of Marlow. In Marseilles the wonderful talent of Orsini, who had been an engraver until he entered the Casino, had suggested to the American the scheme of the counterfeit notes, to be passed in the gambling rooms. Orsini, who since the crumbling of his dreams appeared to become daily more bitter and evil, acquiesced eagerly, and in a short time a series of perfect plates was produced by his skilful fingers. The American had taken a house near the harbour, and here they printed a quantity of one-thousand-franc notes. The American, who appeared to know all the criminals of the old maritime capital, sent several men, well-dressed and polished of bearing, to the casinos at Monte Carlo and at Aix-les-Bains.

All this, the girl said, she would have borne cheerfully for the sake of being with the man she loved. But worse was in store for her. A Viennese woman named Gerty Altin, who danced at one of the music-halls, the Alcazar, was enlisted in the band.

The American had become infatuated with her blue eyes and dimpled baby face. But the girl preferred Orsini, and, to the despair of Gina, Orsini had also become enamoured of this Gerty Altin. When Gina had reproached him with his unfaithfulness she was sent away. Now she wanted her revenge—not on Giulio Orsini, for she still loved him, but on the woman and the American, the cause of all their troubles.

"Oh, that dreadful sneering Gene Marlow," she cried, passionately, "how I hate him! He is not human, that man—no. Always he has with him a huge black cat—I believe it is his familiar. He is a fiend!"

Gerty Altin, the Viennese dancer.

THE next afternoon we arrived at Marseilles. M. Blanchard had brought the Venetian with him, for in return for her valuable information she had requested to be present when her rival was arrested.

The Marseilles police co-operated with us, and the house was at once surrounded. Orsini and the girl Gerty Altin were caught outside the door as they were returning from a restaurant. When we went upstairs we found Gene Marlow sitting in an arm-chair with a large black cat on his knees. He looked up with an acid smile at my Chief.

"Ah, the Monte Carlo policeman again, eh? Well, I said you'd hear from me, and so you did. But you'll never send me to jail." Before we could stop him he had placed a pistol to his head and pulled the trigger.

Thanks to carefully-kept account books in which the names of the confederates were entered, we were able to capture them all. The plates which Orsini had made are now, I believe, in the private collection of the Banque de France.

The Italian was sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment and died two years later in the prison at Grasse.

Since then Dame Roulette has remained the symbol of pure chance, defying all who attempt to harness her capricious nature to a system; but she is a snob, for she willingly gives to the rich and frowns on the poor and needy. M. Blanchard once said, whimsically:—

"We French say '*La* roulette,' because we recognized long ago that her soul is feminine, and you know well that a woman does not love failures."

(*Next month: "Captain Von Copenick, Convict and Humorist."*)

BOTTLED SPIRIT

By ANTHONY ARMSTRONG

("A. A." of *Punch*.)

Illustrated by
L. G. ILLINGWORTH

HUMPHREY LEVESON was not really a Jew, though the other bank clerks, when they wished to annoy him, talked pointedly in his hearing about Jerusalem and Brighton and St. John's Wood. He was, however, sufficiently of Jewish origin to be able to make a really profitable deal with a Scotsman; and had Fate, instead of placing him on a poorly-paid office stool, given him a cheque for two hundred pounds and the free run of the Stock Exchange, he would no doubt in time to come have appeared in the daily papers as a square black smudge over the title, "Well-known Captain of Finance." Which makes it all the more strange that he should have spent his aunt's small legacy on a trip

"Master, what is your command?" came a voice from the shape.

to Italy with no more profit in it than a broadened mind, a bronze ornament representing the Temple of Castor, and a marked taste for Chianti.

Looking back on it all in the chilly December dusk of Victoria Station, Humphrey himself admitted that it had been a silly way of spending his money. He might have done all sorts of more lucrative things with it; but for once the romantic strain in him had overcome the business instinct. To-morrow would see him back in the bank with his legacy a memory and his companions asking him how Palestine was looking. Nevertheless, he determined as he descended to the Tube that he would not return to his lodgings that night, but would spend the last three pounds of his money in a final fling as one of the idle rich at a Bloomsbury hotel. A quarter of an hour later, therefore, saw him swanking up the hotel steps with his label-covered suit-cases and the air of one whose taxi has stupidly set him down two doors away but who is too much of an aristocrat to object.

A Bloomsbury hotel dinner is an unromantic affair after the exciting *Spaghetti* and *Osso Buco* and Chianti of Italy. Humphrey, after first asking for *Fritto Misto* in the forgetful manner of the half-fledged cosmopolitan, and then addressing the waiter in Italian " by mistake "—a far more genuine mistake than he had intended, for the waiter turned out to be Italian—finally flew into the studied temper of the man of the world because there was no Chianti in the wine list.

The waiter, apologizing profusely, said he could get some in for him from a little shop near by; and Humphrey in a lordly manner told him to get two flasks, as he wished also to take a glass or so in his room the last thing at night.

About eleven o'clock Humphrey retired. To an admiring group of visitors from the provinces he had talked about Italy in a patronizing fashion—but it was his swan song. To-morrow the man of the world would be no more and the bank clerk would reappear. Alone in his room he picked up the second flask of Chianti to drink farewell to Italy.

It was very old Chianti, he decided; for the flagon was encrusted with ancient sealing-wax, and the whole was so thick with dust he could not see the contents. He wondered if the waiter had made a mistake, for it had only cost five shillings. He scraped off the sealing-wax—it was as hard as iron—and tried to draw the cork. It was an extremely tough and resilient cork; in fact, it might have been made of indiarubber—and it seemed to have been in a long time.

Humphrey got it out at last and then gave a cry of anger. For the bottle was empty; empty save for a wisp of foul green vapour which floated up into the air. The wine had decomposed or gone wrong or something. He was considering the best way of getting his money back, when he observed with a start that the greenish smoke, still trickling out of the mouth of the flask, was rather unaccountably setting over to one corner. It looked very thick, and Humphrey thought of poison-gas and made a movement towards the window.

HALF-WAY he stopped and stared. Then he sank into a chair in amazement. It had become obvious to him that this was no ordinary smoke. It wasn't behaving at all as smoke should. Smoke did not trickle in one thin, steady line towards a corner of the room; smoke did not then gather thickly in that corner; smoke did not coalesce till it seemed solid. Nor, Humphrey almost whispered aloud, sitting open-eyed with fear in the chair, did smoke seem to coalesce into human shape.

For it was a human shape. There was soon no doubt of it. A greenish, half-solid, half-vaporous form, clothed in flowing robes of mist, and turbaned with the same nebulous material. Looking, in fact, like an Arab sheikh. Now there was a bowed, obsequious head, now two arms, and respectful upturned palms. . . .

Humphrey tugged at his collar, turned his head away, blinked rapidly, and looked again. It was still there. It looked very solid. And it bowed more respectfully.

" Wha — wha — whaddyer want? " he croaked at last, in a harsh, crackling whisper like a nutmeg grater. At the same time he stretched out a trembling hand towards the bell.

" Master, what is your command? " came a voice from the shape, a chilly, formless voice like a draught in a vestry.

" Eh? My command? " gasped Humphrey, and reached the bell. But he did not ring. Now that he felt safer with his finger ready to press the button, he became curious. He stared amazedly at the figure and at the bottle whence it had come. Then, unexpectedly, his original grievance returned to him. " Look here, I wanted a flask of Chianti," he began. " I paid for——"

The misty shape flickered, disappeared, and was there again. So was a flask of Chianti.

Humphrey blinked once more and looked at the two bottles, the full and the empty, but he did not relinquish the bell-push.

" Where'd you get it? " he stammered at last.

"A shop in the neighbouring bazaar, master!"

"Gosh! Is—is it real? I mean—give me a glass!"

Again there was a flicker; and he found a glass full of wine in his hand. Yet a bare moment before the bottle had been corked and the glass empty on the table beside it. He drank. It was good. So good that he let go the bell-push, and poured himself another.

"What's the game?" he asked at last, feeling much braver. "I mean, why d'you come here and start standing me drinks?"

"You are my master," said the turbaned figure, simply. "You have but to command, and I obey. Whether it be rare unguents"—the shape's voice took on rather a monotonous sing-song, as though it were reciting something very familiar—"from the farthest corner of the earth, or whether it be some slave girl——"

"Can you get back again in there?" interrupted Humphrey, with much interest, indicating the bottle.

"Er—what?" said the figure, rather thrown out of its stride. "Oh, yes, of course. . . . Or whether it be some slave girl from the Circassian markets; or whether it be merely——"

"Well, let's see you do it."

"A Circassian slave, master?" asked the figure, apparently getting ready.

"No, no. Let's see you get back inside."

The lower ends of the shape gathered up slowly into a thin trickle like cotton being spun into thread and moved towards the flagon mouth. It made Humphrey quite sick.

"Here, stop! All right! I see," he cried.

The figure stopped.

"As I was saying," it continued severely, "—or whether it be merely to visit the bazaar and fetch sherbet, I the Jinn of the——"

"To fetch gin?" asked Humphrey, again interested.

The Jinn with difficulty preserved an offended silence. He had now made three attempts to bring off his introductory speech, and had been foiled each time. He wasn't going to try again. He had his own dignity to consider.

"What's your name?" asked Humphrey.

"It is hidden," responded the Jinn, loftily. "You may call me what you please!"

"Well, I shall call you Ginger," announced Humphrey after thought, and another glass of Chianti. The Jinn drew himself up stiffly. "Ginger the Jinn," explained Humphrey, kindly. "See?" The Jinn did see. He rather wished his name hadn't been hidden after all. Even "Hi, you there!" or "What-ho, without!" would have been better than "Ginger."

"What are your commands?" he asked in haughty tones.

But Humphrey was now not in the least frightened. He had read his fairy stories and knew that a privately-owned Jinn was the best solution of the servant problem in the world, for they had to obey their masters in everything. And he was obviously now the master of this one.

"Well, what can you do?" he asked at last.

"Everything," said the Jinn, simply.

"Well, get me a thousand pounds."

"I'm sorry," replied the Jinn. "We are not allowed to procure cash or valuables. We always used to be asked for that, and it led to trouble with the police, and so now our Trade Union has forbidden it."

"Well, then, Ginger, take me back to Italy," commanded Humphrey.

HUMPHREY wished afterwards he had thought it all out a bit better, though as a matter of fact he had not really believed the Jinn would do it. There was a flash of light, a numbing chill from a strong wind which tore through his very bones, and he was standing on a desolate mountain top. About him was a clammy mist and above a few stars could be seen. It was intensely cold, and he was still but lightly clad.

"Here, where are we?" he shouted with chattering teeth.

"Italy," replied the Jinn with pride. "The exact centre," he added. "In the Apennines."

"Wha'—what time is it?"

"Night time, of course," explained the Jinn. "You see, it was Wednesday over in England."

Humphrey realized that his staff work for the move had been thoroughly bad. He had no money on him, and Ginger didn't seem up to that part of any show.

"Er—take me back," he stammered.

The Jinn, slightly puzzled, obeyed.

Five minutes later, crouched over his bedroom fire, Humphrey was just beginning to think he might possibly get warm again after the trip. The Jinn was looking sulky in a corner. Evidently he didn't think much of his new master. Not once yet had he been asked for sherbet or a slave girl.

"Look here, Ginger," said Humphrey after a while, feeling that so far he had not made much of a success of his newly-given authority. "If you're not allowed to get me money, what's the good of you?"

"Other masters," pointed out the Jinn, severely, "have used their brains." He

obviously didn't like Humphrey at all.

"They have found ways," he finished, and stared at the ceiling.

"Ah!" replied Humphrey, thoughtfully. "Get me an old brandy, will you?"

"I presume this hotel has waiters," retorted the Jinn, annoyed.

"Don't argue. Get me a brandy."

The brandy was at his elbow, so suddenly and so close that he knocked it over. A sound like a laugh came from the Jinn.

Humphrey was about to order another and assert himself, when he realized that he had better keep on good terms with his new servant if he wanted to make some money, and free himself for ever from a future of toil at the desk. Also he had just had an idea of how to do it—an idea which was resolving itself into a vision of a large hall and himself as a famous conjurer performing incredible things with the help of Ginger behind the scenes.

He began at once to flatter the ruffled Jinn and praise his powers, till he at last had him purring like a cat and telling a long story of how he knew more than most people about the Aladdin's Palace Mystery.

"Now, Ginger," said Humphrey at last, having got a definite plan in his head, "you see that suit-case on the bed; well, suppose I were to say 'Make that suit-case disappear and, at the same time, don't let anyone see you doing it'?"

"Child's play," said the Jinn, airily.

"Well, off you go. Do it."

In a twinkling the Jinn was not; nor was the suit-case.

Humphrey had a moment's apprehension. Once the Jinn had disappeared, he realized, he couldn't give him orders. Supposing Ginger, finding himself free and with a suit-case, had taken it into his head to go off to Brighton for the week-end? Supposing——

Then he realized that the Jinn's bottle was still on the table and that the creature presumably couldn't go far without that.

"Does that please you, master?" said a voice behind him, and he turned round to find the Jinn had reappeared and was beaming at him from another corner. The suit-case, however, was still absent.

"Wonderful. Er—where is the suit-case? In the air?"

"No, no. I have just put it somewhere else. It must go *somewhere*, you know."

"Well, then, where?"

"I put it——" the Jinn was beginning, when a piercing scream came from the next room—"on the bed in the next room," he continued, imperturbably.

"But was there someone in the bed?"

"There may have been," said Ginger, in the airy fashion of one who does not bother himself over trifles.

"There was," said Humphrey, apprehensively, as another scream rang out "You'd better get it back."

The suit-case was back.

"She had knocked it on the floor," said Ginger, pleasantly. "She is now in a faint, and will think it was all a dream. A stout woman wearing a flannel——"

"Here, Ginger, old man!" said Humphrey, hastily. "Be careful! I'm unmarried. And I don't go charging about ladies' bedrooms like you do. Are you married, by the way?"

"By the grace of Allah, I have ninety-three wives."

"Er—then you'd better go to bed," said Humphrey, weakly, and watched the Jinn dissolve mistily into his bottle.

When the last shred had gone he corked the bottle up and packed it very carefully. Then he got into bed and tried hard to believe it all. He found just as he dropped off to sleep that he couldn't.

HUMPHREY'S first action next morning was to sit up and laugh at his absurd fancies of the night before. He had had a drop too much Chianti, obviously, and had been imagining things. He laughed very heartily till his eye fell on the glass of brandy which he had upset and the second bottle of Chianti. Then he stopped short and hurriedly fumbled in his suit-case for the other and more mysterious flask.

He pulled the cork apprehensively and peered in. A tiny trickle of mist showed for a moment and a small though unmistakable voice said: "Grr away! Nottime gerrup yet!"

Humphrey recorked it and sat down on the edge of the bed. So it was true. And if it was, then his visions of wealth might come true also. He set himself during breakfast to plan things out; for he was quite shrewd and hitherto had only lacked opportunity. Not for nothing was his name Leveson. He had the true Jewish flair, the ability to see the business aspect of any new thing, and to see it straight away in its broadest line.

After breakfast he drew the cork again and let the Jinn emerge.

"You're looking fine after your beauty sleep, Ginger," he began.

The Jinn simpered a bit. He was pleasantly flattered. People didn't often treat him like this. More often they said, "Hey, you! Remove my rival!" whereupon he took them to Samarkand. He had a fine selection of rivals of all nationalities and epochs tucked away in Samarkand.

"Do you remember that little trick with my suit-case?" continued Humphrey.

"Yes, master."

"Supposing I took you to see a friend and hid you behind a screen, and then asked you to do that trick again without his seeing you. Could you do it?"

Ginger waved a nebulous hand to show that it was a mere nothing.

"Well, come along, then."

AN hour later Humphrey Leveson was closeted with the manager of the Palliseum. This gentleman, a stout man with a cigar, had refused to see him till the determined Humphrey had had himself transported into his presence by Ginger, who had thereafter returned swiftly to his bottle. That, he observed, had impressed the manager not a little. In fact, Humphrey had to loosen his collar and fan him before he ceased being impressed. He was now quite recovered and was saying:—

"Of course, Mr. Leveson, a turn such as you suggest—no less than the total disappearance of a human being from the centre of an empty stage—would have to be *very* convincing for me to insert in our programme. Certainly not next week, as you suggest. And the returns would hardly justify the advertising necessary."

"My idea," said Humphrey, the corked bottle in his hand, "was to let it come on next Monday at the usual prices as an advert, and then put fancy prices on for the remainder of the week."

"Public wouldn't come at fancy prices."

"Wait till you see the thing!"

"It would have to be nothing short of a miracle," said the manager, obviously inclined to end the conversation. "However, let's see it."

Humphrey asked for a screen, went behind it, and uncorked the Jinn.

"Now," he said to the manager, "shall I start on you?"

The manager said very quickly that his private secretary always dealt with everything first, and so in a minute a nervous-looking young man was standing in the centre of the room.

"Now watch," said Humphrey, and whispered round the screen to Ginger.

There was a flicker and the secretary was not there.

"Good God!" said the manager, and looked under the table. "Did you—— Really, I've never——" He searched the room, and then looked in the adjoining office. "Man, it's marvellous!" he said at last. "I'll make your fortune for you over this—if you let me have sole rights for a period."

"Well," said Humphrey, cheerfully, "let's do business."

The manager, still stammering incoherently with amazement, was so shaken that he rang his bell twice for his secretary and cursed his dilatoriness before he remembered to ask for him back again.

The young man reappeared, even more nervous and very red in the face. He was stammering something about a lady's bedroom. Humphrey, recollecting that he had forgotten to specify a destination for his victim, realized that the conscientious and unimaginative Jinn had wafted him off to the same place as the suit-case on the previous night, and he had to talk at great length to cover it all up.

Half an hour later he left the office with a signed contract, an advance in cash, and one of the manager's cigars.

HE set to work at once on his new scheme. He moved to a more expensive hotel, where he took two rooms, a bedroom for himself and a sitting-room for the Jinn to take the victim to during the few minutes' disappearance. He saw at once that unless he gave Ginger definite instructions and a definite destination, he would be taking them into stray bedrooms all over London—if not to Samarkand. He also bought a dress suit. And then he tendered his resignation to his bank; for he saw his way to prosperity clear before him.

The first night was an enormous success. Humphrey began by transferring articles from the actual hands of members of the audience to different parts of the hall, the Jinn moving so swiftly he could not be seen; and worked up thence to his big act—in which he volunteered to make any member of the audience disappear completely from an empty stage and in full view of everyone. He pointed out that it had never been done before; that there were no trick boxes, and that his only apparatus would be a small screen away at the back of the stage, where he himself would stand. This, of course, concealed the bottle and the Jinn, who was every bit as excited as his master at this his first public appearance on any stage during an existence of many thousand years.

After a little hesitation a young man came up, and after Humphrey had whispered behind the screen incontinently disappeared in full view. The result was a *furore*, and when the dazed victim reappeared a moment later the house rose at Humphrey. He left the theatre that first night a made man, and every paper the next day had headlines about his turn.

The house was crowded every night, at fabulous charges. The manager had booked Humphrey up for several months and paid large advances. His act was discussed everywhere, the papers were enthusiastic,

A nervous-looking young man was standing in the centre of the room. "Now watch," said Humphrey.

the audiences compared notes, and the victims compared notes. Members of the audience were agreed that they all saw a sort of dark flash which seemed to sweep the victim up. The victims all agreed that they had an impression during their period of absence of a realistic place like an hotel sitting-room; all except one lady of a spiritualistic turn of mind, who talked of seeing angels with harps and of having talked with the ghost of Julius Cæsar.

By the end of the week Humphrey had more than two thousand pounds in cash. He was, however, a bit worried about the future. For now that the novelty had worn off, the Jinn was getting restive. He showed an increasing disinclination to return to his bottle, and expressed a strong desire to come to the footlights and take some of the applause. In short, he was getting uppish. Humphrey had to be firm with him, and relations were becoming very strained between them. The Jinn's early dislike of his master had returned tenfold, and he talked largely about overwork, his Union, Lodge meetings of Afreets, and a policy of "ca' canny," if not a strike. He stated further that he had made a protest to his shop steward. It was evident that trouble was ahead.

The trouble came upon the last night of the week. It was brought on, no doubt, by Humphrey's inconsiderateness in sending Ginger back and forth a good bit for drinks and cigarettes for friends of his who had looked in to see him. The Jinn disliked all this intensely because, to preserve the secret, he was always ordered to move so fast that he could not be seen, and he found this wearing. He obeyed all the commands, but, Humphrey noticed, always with a malevolent gleam in his smoky eye, which seemed to say, " Just you wait."

At the beginning of the turn he got worse. He became very difficult indeed over the translation of the articles and purposely made several mistakes, because Humphrey had not been literal enough in his order, with the result that, when it came to the big scene, for once the audience, though interested, was inclined to be angry.

A young girl was the chosen victim on this occasion, for Humphrey found it was better to get girls, and even the Jinn had said earlier that he rather liked carrying girls about, as it reminded him of old times. The girl was placed by herself in the centre, and then Humphrey, near the screen, whispered to the Jinn as usual :—

" Take her to my room ! "

The girl disappeared.

After the applause had ceased and Ginger had returned, Humphrey whispered, " Bring her back ! "

Nothing happened.

" Bring her back ! " repeated Humphrey, angrily, and looked behind the screen.

" Sha'n't," said the Jinn, standing there with folded arms.

" Go on, or I'll—I'll report you to Eblis."

" Ha ! " sneered the Jinn. " We're quits now. A strike has been declared. I've just had the news from our Arabian headquarters."

He proceeded to get deliberately into his bottle, and Humphrey, about to try to stop him, had his attention very forcibly diverted to the audience, which, angry before, was now getting very nasty. They were, in fact, standing up in their places and shouting " Bring her back."

" I'm very sorry," he began, " there's been a slight——"

HE got no farther, for at that moment a section of the crowd, led by an irascible, red-faced gentleman, shouting " Where is my daughter, you blackguard ? " was storming the stage.

Humphrey left hurriedly through the wings, snatching up the precious bottle as he did so. As the audience surged behind the scenes, Humphrey shot out of the stage door into a taxi and drove like mad to his hotel.

He had, however, foolishly forgotten that his hotel was known, with the result that he and the red-faced leader of his pursuers, now quite openly shouting indelicate remarks about white-slavers, reached his rooms almost together.

" Where's my daughter, you—— You've got her in your bedroom," mouthed the furious parent, others now at his heels, as Humphrey hurriedly tried to unlock his door.

" N-no ! She's quite safe, quite safe. Slight mistake ! " gasped Humphrey, cowering. " She's in that sitting-room next door—where they all go. They only——"

" You're a liar," cried the other, not a nice man, and one or two of his adherents rolled their sleeves up. " She's in your bedroom. I know your kind——"

" It's true. I swear it," gasped Humphrey, and flung open his bedroom door to prove it.

There in a faint on the bed was the lately-vanished young lady. The vindictive Jinn, told to take her to Humphrey's room, had again purposely and maliciously made a final mistake.

The fact that the red-faced man stopped to pick up a poker instead of going in with his bare hands saved Humphrey's life. Still clutching the bottle, he just got into the sitting-room by the communicating door and shot the bolt in time.

As they commenced to batter it in, the red-faced man talking picturesquely about blood, Humphrey called desperately on the Jinn for aid.

" Hullo ! " said the Jinn, putting his head out.

" Save me ! " cried Humphrey.

" Strike," remarked the Jinn briefly, and prepared to retire.

" They're going to kill me ! They're——"

" What ? " The Jinn reappeared, slightly intrigued. " Why ? "

" Because of that girl whom you took to my bedroom and then wouldn't bring back."

" Gracious," remarked the Jinn, much surprised. " All for a girl. What is the world coming to if a fellow can't pinch a girl or so ? Why, in my young days——"

" Yes, yes, yes." The door was splintering, and Humphrey was not in the mood for lurid anecdotes of the Jinn's past. " Save me ! Obey just one more order."

" Ah ! " remarked the Jinn. " The owners are coming to terms, are they ? " He began to talk about peace overtures and national tribunals, till the scared Humphrey went on his knees.

" Just obey one more command and I'll never ask you anything again."

"A district settlement, eh?" said the Jinn, suddenly. "All right."

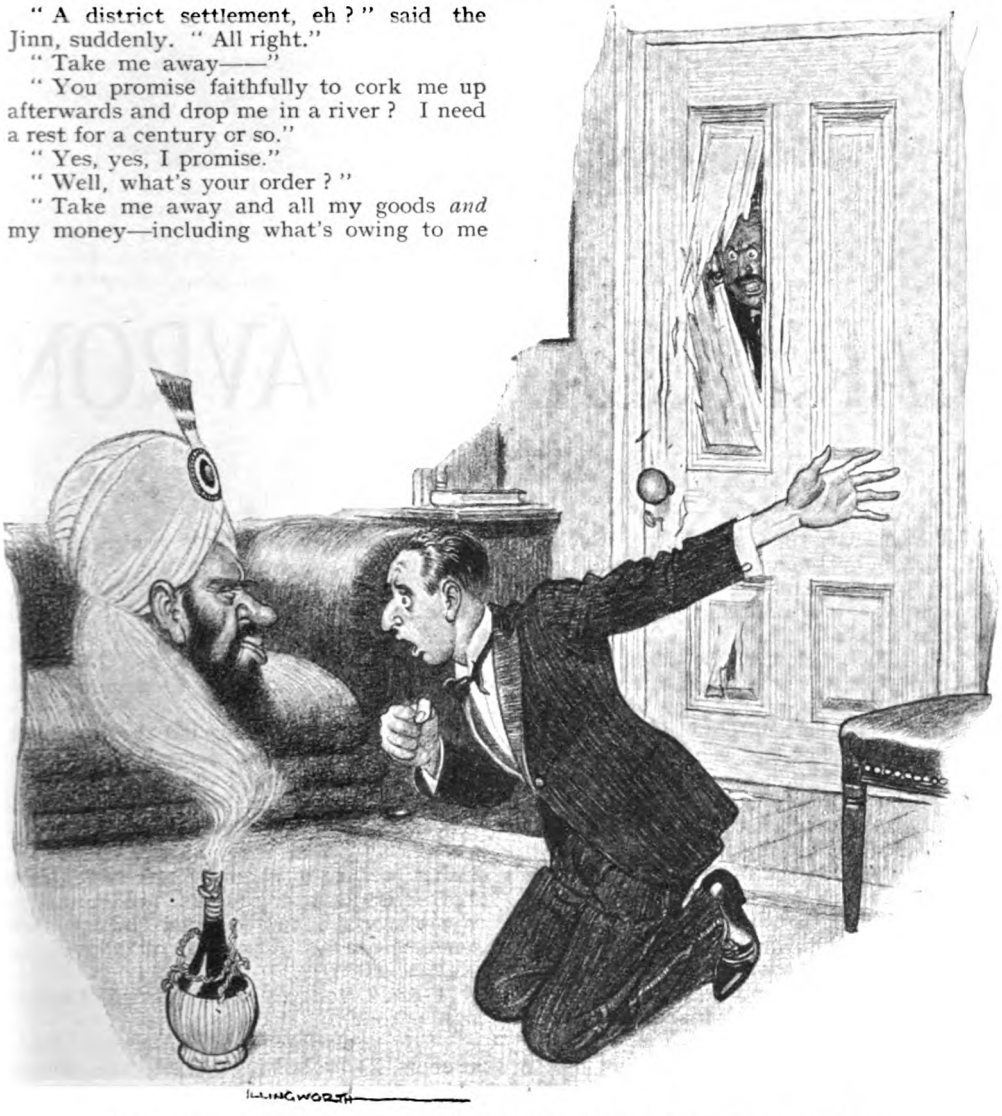
"Take me away——"

"You promise faithfully to cork me up afterwards and drop me in a river? I need a rest for a century or so."

"Yes, yes, I promise."

"Well, what's your order?"

"Take me away and all my goods *and* my money—including what's owing to me



"Just obey one more command," said Humphrey, "and I'll never ask you anything again."

at the Palliseum box-office for to-night—to America."

"Whew!" whistled the Jinn. "That's an order, isn't it? Er—where *is* America? I've never heard of it——"

"Quick, quick! The door's giving. Do you know Mexico?"

"Yes."

"Well, America's on the right as you go in. Only, if you value your life, don't tell them you've never heard of it."

"All right," said the Jinn, and stooped over to him.

AND there Humphrey Leveson is, in America. He wrote me the other day and said he was in the patent medicine business, supplying whisky to doctors, and doing well, while the Jinn is in the Hudson River. Humphrey often tells them this story and they believe it, because they're used to tall stories in America.

But over here, of course, it's different; and I can't get anyone to believe it at all. In fact, now I come to think of it, I'm not certain I really believe it myself.

ICEBERGS

By

MARY CLARE DAVRON

Illustrated by
A. W. BROWN

IT was letter-time at the Imperial, and the lobby buzzed. Hoskins, the clerk, a pompous, middle-aged man of tremendous self-importance, was handing out the letters.

"Miss Cherry Mercer," he called.

A girl with a heart-shaped little face and skin like magnolia petals came forward and took the letter he held out. Then, without looking to right or left, she passed sedately out to the porch and walked quickly past the long lines of rocking-chairs where imposing-looking ladies were assembling their knitting and card-tables for the morning.

Down the steps she went, and out upon the drive which led to the open road. A little way down that road she seated herself, carefully and with due regard for her crisp white skirt, on a huge rock beneath a shady tree, then opened her letter. It was from her mother and read the same as the others. Glad Cherry was having such a wonderful time; she deserved it, and her mother wished the two weeks could be extended for the whole summer.

Cherry shuddered at the prospect and thanked Heaven they could not. If her mother only knew!

She put the letter back in her bag and then carefully powdered her face. To-day was Tuesday. It would be good to be back in her home again, good to be once more at work in Mr. Price's law-office. And her mother must never know.

Snapping shut her bag, she carefully got down from the rock and started briskly off up the road. It was with these walks that she had managed to fill her mornings.

To-day she went farther than usual. She explored a new road and found it delightful. Reaching the point where she must turn back if she would be in time for luncheon, she stopped suddenly at sounds issuing from a field just around a bend in the road: soft groans, heavy breathing, muttered curses. "Damn!" in a muffled but highly explosive voice. A sound of metal clinking, a long hard-drawn breath, a sigh as though a mighty struggle had come to naught, then silence.

Cherry sped quickly around the bend and in through a fresh-cut, jagged gap in the thicket that surrounded the field.

There, sprawled on the ground against a rock, scratched and bleeding, one baleful eye glaring up at her and the other fast closing because of a huge black welt rising above it, lay a startling specimen of humanity. A motor-cycle, twisted and broken, lay shattered around him; part of it lay upon him.

"C-can't you get up?" cried Cherry, running to him.

"Why, yes. Of course," he snarled. With an effort, he cocked his head to one side so that his good eye was full upon her. "But I'm lying here just because I—think it's fun."

His swollen eye and the blood trickling from scratches on his face, together with his constrained position, gave him a truly alarming appearance; and his attitude toward Cherry was highly belligerent. Nevertheless he was human and he was approachable, two things of paramount importance to Cherry at the moment. So her voice was sympathetic and her touch gentle as she bent down and wiped away a little red stream running from a cut in his cheek.

"Never mind my face," he snapped unappreciatively. "Can't you see I'm pinned down? See if you can lift that darned thing off my leg."

All eagerness, Cherry did as she was told.

With a big tug, she heaved off the wrecked motor-cycle. The young man breathed easier, tried to move his leg groaned, then lay still, his face against the ground.

"Can't move her an inch," he said, referring to the leg. "See if you can help me sit up." Obediently she helped him, and between them they managed to get him into a sitting position. Again Cherry applied her handkerchief to the still bleeding wound in his cheek.

"I wish you'd let my face alone," he whined, plaintively. "Something's the matter with my ankle. Can't you concentrate on that?"

Gravely the girl accepted the responsibility. "I'm going to take off your shoe. I think your ankle's twisted," she said.

"I'll get you out of this field," she went on. "And as soon as I've tied up your ankle and washed your face—yes, I said washed your face—I'm going back to the hotel and get a bus to come for you. How did you come to go over that ledge? And where were you going?"

"Where is this?" he asked, and winced a little as she tightened a bandage.

She named the town.

"Here's where I am going. This happened"—he waved a hand toward the wrecked motor-cycle—"because, as I was about to turn that bend in the road, a pony cart with three kids and a nurse in it came along full tilt, and it was either run into them or go through the hedge and hit the rock."

"It was noble of you to think so quickly—and act like that."

"Not at all," he replied, boredly. "I should have much preferred to kill them all. Manslaughter law's so inconvenient, though. But at that"—he passed an exploring forefinger over his bruised eye—"I think I'd have taken a chance if I knew what I was in for by leaping through that hedge."

Cherry flashed him a withering look and decided she had never before met anyone so ill-tempered. She continued tying up the ankle, with the minimum of groans from him, for she had had some first-aid training and was a nurse by instinct. Then she laid his leg out straight in front of him.

"Be careful now—don't move it," she cautioned needlessly.

"Oh, no! I'll not be careful," he answered derisively. "I'll probably get up and waltz in a few minutes. Really, in the matter of giving pertinent advice, you excel anyone I ever met."

Cherry ignored this. He was in a very bad way, and if sarcasm helped him at all, he was welcome to the luxury of it.

"Is there a cup or anything that'll hold water concealed in that mass over there?" She pointed to the wrecked motor-cycle.

"You might try the kit." Owlishly he watched her while she pried tentatively among the ruins, one wide-open blue eye upon her, the other now entirely closed. She explored gropingly through the pile of broken wire, torn leather, and bent steel.

"I'd sort of like a look into that little mirror of yours. . . . Good Lord!" he exclaimed.

"I—I can't find anything," she began, falteringly.

"You'd hardly find anything there," he commented, then drawled: "Even with my one eye, I can see what a profound knowledge of machinery you have. The kit is fastened to the bar that flew over there."

And there it was, right before her eyes. How dense he must think her!

Back along the road a bit she had passed a spring. She hastened to it now and returned with the cup filled with water.

"Drink some of it," she commanded. "I'm going to wash your face with the rest."

He drank the water, then obediently held up his face. Cherry mopped it gently, found two bad scratches, and affixed here and there some plaster from the kit. Then she bethought herself of a soft handkerchief—the extra one her mother always insisted upon—which she carried in her small vanity case. Just the thing to dry the sensitive bruised face. She reached for her bag.

An exclamation of horror from the patient, and Cherry stopped short.

"Wh-what is it?" she cried in dismay.

He pointed to the vanity bag. "What are you going to do with that?" he demanded.

"Get a handkerchief out of it to dry your face."

He relaxed and breathed a heavy sigh of relief. "I thought you were going to paint and powder me," he gasped, meekly. "Or, maybe, pluck me eyebrows."

"You're awfully silly," commented Cherry, briskly.

"I'm at your mercy," he explained. "And my map has had all the innovations it can stand for one day." He made a whimsical grimace. "If you don't think the effect would be too startling for one in my weakened condition, I'd sort of like a look into that little mirror of yours."

Cherry held up the mirror.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed, in tones of such genuine alarm that Cherry laughed aloud. He handed back the mirror and surveyed her gravely.

"Young lady," he said, "some day I'll get even with you for that laugh."

Then for the first time he smiled, and Cherry wondered that a smile could make so much difference on any countenance, particularly the battle-scarred one before her. And it was that smile that decided his fate!

FOR suddenly an idea came to Cherry, a wild new hope was born, and she made a daring plan.

"You're not going to be entirely well," she said, judicially surveying the swollen ankle, "before the end of the week. Not until Saturday or Sunday at the earliest."

"O prophet of cheer!" he groaned.

They tried out his other leg then, and, leaning heavily on Cherry, he managed to hobble out to the roadway. There luck was with them. One of the express cars that carried luggage between the station and the hotels was just coming down the road. At Cherry's call the driver drew up alongside of them.

"Won't you please take us to the Imperial?" Cherry pleaded.

"You staying at the Imperial?" he questioned, looking at the young man, who at the moment appeared much the worse for wear.

"Well, I don't know," replied the latter, holding out his bandaged leg. "Foot-loose and fancy free as I am, I should make a tour of the hotels to see which would suit me best. I should——"

"He's coming to the Imperial," Cherry cut in.

The driver helped them up to the back of the car and made room among the luggage for Cherry to sit beside her battered partner.

"Perhaps you'd better know something right off," Cherry began impressively, her eyes steadfastly upon his face. "It's this: I—I'm kidnapping you."

She waited for her words to take effect, which they did not appreciably. "I'm taking advantage of your helpless condition and bringing you to the Imperial. And you've got to stay there until the end of the week."

"A couple of days, and this leg will be all right."

"Doesn't make any difference. You've got to stay till the end of the week."

"The end of the week! The end of the week! Sounds like a litany. What's the end of the week got to do with me?"

"This much," said Cherry, solemnly. "At the end of the week I'm leaving. Then you can do what you like."

She told him then, with an intensity that even he took cognizance of, about the holiday plans that had so grievously miscarried. Of how she was to meet the Landays, two old ladies, friends of her mother, who lived in New York and came to the Imperial every summer, and who had written in answer to her mother's letter that they would look after Cherry going up to the hotel and during her stay there. At the last moment, just as she was about to board the train for New York, they had sent a telegram. Miss Angela was ill and they were postponing their trip until later in the season. They would be glad to have Cherry with them then.

Then! As if young ladies who worked

in law-offices could alter holiday plans at a moment's notice!

Cherry's mother never saw that telegram. Cherry crushed it tight in her hand. It had been too late to turn back then. Her mother must not, could not be disappointed. All the pretty new holiday clothes had cost too much in loving labour of all too hard-working hands. The whole wild scheme of her holiday had been paid for too dearly in scrimping and saving and tremulous planning on her mother's part to have it peter out then. So she had come alone.

She neglected, however, to inform her companion of a certain other disappointment that lay in store for her mother. For when Cherry's protests had been loudest at the extravagance of her holiday plans, the mother had pointed out firmly that every girl had her future to take care of—meaning, of course, to marry; and Cherry recognized this as the *motif* in the otherwise wild plan of sending her to the expensive resort. Her mother had once known a girl who went away for a holiday and came back engaged. Many times since her arrival had Cherry laughed at the prospect of such a thing as that happening to her at the Imperial.

Her companion listened gravely during her recital. When she had finished, mock alarm spread over the visible portions of his face.

"What will my duties be in this new *rôle?*" he asked, adding, "I assume I'll have duties, since I'm obviously disqualified to sit around and merely look beautiful."

And she told him. "You've got to talk to me, to sit with me on the porch; since you're not able to dance, we'll sit just outside the windows and let the music come out to us—we'll be wallflowers together. And I'll read to you if your eye doesn't get better, and I'll help you to walk while you're lame—your foot isn't going to be so bad, I guess. But you can't go away and leave me alone again with all that mob of strange people!"

"Come, come, it can't be as bad as all that," he said, with surprising gentleness.

"Oh, it is. It is, I tell you. Of course, it's all my own fault for coming alone, but Heaven knows I didn't want to come." Her tennis-racket, she told him, she had not unsheathed; she had not danced once—she almost had, she told him, and related the incident.

"A man named Twining. Hostess introduced him just as a waltz was beginning. I think he would have asked me, but a group of girls came along just then, and one called, 'Ah, there, Twiny!' so he went off with her. That same girl and her mother came the day I did, and the hostess introduced us. A Mrs. and a Miss Jardine." Cherry showed him how they had acknowledged the introduction—the one with a cool nod, the other a haughty stare. Then they had abruptly gone away. "So," finished Cherry, "I never went back to the ballroom, and those are the only people I've met."

"Won't I be somewhat of a broken reed?"

She shook her head. "You'll be someone to talk to," she said.

"Why have you stuck it out so long? If you went home and told your mother——"

"That's the one thing I wouldn't do," she declared, firmly. "I would break her heart. She's set so much store by this holiday. Oh, no; I'd rather die than go home."

THEY had turned in at the drive to the Imperial and now stopped. The driver and Cherry helped him down, and, holding one leg very stiffly, he was able to walk up the steps, assisted only by the girl, upon whom he leaned heavily. There was a slow walk to the desk, and lorgnettes aplenty were turned upon them. To Cherry's surprise, her companion was undisturbed, seemed unaware of their scrutiny.

She supported the young man to the desk, and he asked for a room.

"Not a thing left," volunteered the clerk, looking in amazement from Cherry to her companion.

"Won't you please find some sort of room he can have?" she pleaded. "He can't go around looking for another place while he is unable to walk. Please see if you can't take care of him for the rest of the week. Only five days. Won't you please try, Mr. Hoskins?"

The awful fear of having to relinquish the one thing that would make bearable the rest of her stay made Cherry eloquent. For all his pomposity, Hoskins was in a sense human, and the girl's eyes as she looked up at him held an imploring look that was flattering. "It's been so lonesome for me here," she threw in, "the Landays not coming and all."

Magical name! Hoskins gave a fairly good impersonation of a man starting a heavy intellect to work.

"There's a room," he began impressively, "away up near the servants' quarters. It is usually kept for a linen room. But once in a while, when we've been very crowded, we've put a cot in there. If your friend——"

"That'll suit me fine," cut in the youth. "How do I go up, and when do I come down to eat?"

"Just a moment," commanded Hoskins. "Your baggage?"

"Haven't any. It—it evidently hasn't got here yet."

Frank incredulity settled in Hoskins' eyes. Cherry's own were imploringly upon him. "Then I'll have to ask you for some —er—security. Without any baggage——"

"Certainly." The youth put his hand in his pocket, fumbled around, withdrew it.

"Sorry," he explained. "I don't seem——" Something soft and thick was pushed into his hand at the side where Cherry stood. He stopped speaking, and held out to the clerk a little wad of money.

"Will that do?" he asked.

"How much?"—from Hoskins.

"Really, I haven't the faintest idea," came the bored answer.

Hoskins bent upon him a puzzled scrutiny. Cherry threw herself into the gap. "He isn't himself," she said, hastily. "Usually he's—he's lots different from this. But he's all shaken up from his fall." Then she added quickly: "But he'll be all right after to-night, after he's had a rest and something to eat."

"You haven't registered," Hoskins reminded, as the porter came to assist the new guest to his room.

"That's so," replied he, easily. "But perhaps Miss—er—perhaps this young lady will do it for me. She's developed an amazing knack for helping me to-day."

Hoskins was not a man with whom a penniless stranger could take liberties of a facetious nature. Cherry realized that.

"His hands are shaken from the fall. I don't think he could hold a pen" She took the pen then stopped abruptly. What was his name? But Hoskins' eyes were on her. She hesitated only a second, then wrote the first name that came to her—that of the hero in the book she had just been reading.

"John Carstairs, New York."

That is how he went down on the register. He looked on over Cherry's shoulder, and something like a grin came to his distorted face. Cherry hoped he wouldn't be disposed toward facetiousness now. Hoskins wouldn't stand it. But that gentleman was already delivering himself in tones that could be heard throughout the lobby for the benefit of an imposing-looking group that had just come in:—

"I'm sorry not to have a better room for your friend, Miss Mercer, but we haven't a thing left. The last suite we had was taken to-day, taken by"—he paused for full effect, then rolled the name around on his tongue—"by Mr. J. Wellington Crabtree of—of—the West."

JOHN CARSTAIRS did not come down that evening. While Cherry was eating her dinner at the little table which she shared with a lady with an expansive glittering bosom, a note was brought to her.

Dear Miss Mercer,—

I got a full look in the mirror and speedily decided you'd be a lot better off if I didn't start playing the kidnapee until to-morrow. I've got a compress on my eye now; my bad

leg is tenderly propped up in front of me, and food has been brought me.

Pippa passes! God's in his heaven! All's well in the linen room!

Faithfully,
JOHN CARSTAIRS, *New York.*

P.S.—When we meet to-morrow, better call me Jack. I think old Donner and Blitzen at the desk is suspicious. What's your first name? How much money was in that roll? You're a brick!

Cherry wrote back:—

Glad you're comfortable. Be more respectful to Hoskins. My name is Cherry.

There was twenty-five dollars in that roll, spending-money for my vacation. You're the first thing I've seen to spend it on.

You're awfully sarcastic and quite impatient and cross, but nobody can say you aren't game!

The two days that followed were Cherry's first light-hearted ones at the Imperial. John Carstairs was gay and droll and he made her laugh a great deal. Yet, as Thursday wore on, a vague feeling of anxiety

came over her. She began to be troubled by the irresponsibility of John.

Here he was, without money or baggage, falling in with her plan as though that was what he had originally started out to do. Apparently he had not a care in the world.

After dinner they wandered down toward the golf-course, and Cherry's misgivings got the better of her.

"John, what do you do for a living?"

She supported the young man to the desk, and he asked for a room.

"Oh, a little of everything. Jack of all trades is the classic nomenclature."

"Don't you think you ought to be serious about something? Especially about your work?"

"Why, child, my work is the only thing I am serious about."

"Yet you don't know what it is!"

"I do, too." He paused a moment, and Cherry noted the pause. "I'm a mechanic, Cherry," he told her finally. "And a darned good one, too, if I do say it myself."

A mechanic! Involuntarily Cherry's thoughts flashed to her mother's plans for her. "Dear Mother, I am engaged to a mechanic." She wondered how her mother would receive a letter like that, if she would consider it an accomplishment of the purpose for which she had planned this holiday. Cherry decided she would not.

"How'd you come to be that?" she asked, by way of saying something.

"Born in me, I guess. Got most of my practical training, though, in the army."

"What'd you do in the army?"

"Mechanic," he replied, laconically.

Friday morning he took her for a ride. Down in the village he had seen for hire a motor-cycle with a side-car. "Just because my limp won't let me walk much is no reason why you should miss your outing," he told her, and left her on the porch while he rode down on the bus to bring up the motor-cycle.

As she sat there waiting for him, she caught a conversation going on beside her. Mrs. Orr, the hostess at the hotel, was talking with a group that included the Jardines and Mr. Twining, the youth with whom Cherry had almost danced.

"Never saw a year with so few men," commented Mrs. Jardine.

"It's quality, not quantity, that counts," contributed Twining.

"Right," agreed Miss Jardine, and smiled at him as brightly as if he had uttered a great witticism.

"Probably wouldn't look at him at home," Cherry told herself. "But here a man's a man."

"But to-morrow ought to put a different complexion on things." The hostess was speaking. "Quantity—there'll be two or three men at least in the party; and an abundance of quality—Mr. Crabtree is reputed to be the richest young bachelor in the West."

"Oh, of course none of us can compete with Crabtree," complained Twining. Miss Jardine smiled at him again.

"We're making the big ball to-morrow night an aviation dance on his account," said Mrs. Orr. "An American ace—but everybody knows his record—not a typical rich man's son."

"As if he needed to be anything with all his money!" chimed in Mrs. Jardine, and Cherry's dislike for her mounted.

A handsome motor-car drove up and took away a laughing picnic party. Those in the Jardine group commented upon the make and beauty of the car. Two more followed it in rapid succession, and were speedily noted and appraised as they sped down the drive.

Immediately in their wake, and with more noise, it seemed to Cherry, than she had ever heard even a motor-cycle make, came John Carstairs with his side-seat car. It wasn't a good-looking motor-cycle at best, and showed signs of considerable wear. The eyes of all the porch crowd were on it as it swept up in the wake of the magnificent cars.

Cherry flushed. The contrast between John's equipage and these others was comically apparent. And as she walked primly down the porch steps, she was aware that the amused eyes of the Jardine contingent were upon her. She caught distinctly a remark ending: "seems to have staked her claim."

"Madame, the Rolls," John announced with a low bow and an elaborate flourish.

"Thought I wouldn't be able to get it," he continued, in tones perfectly audible to the highly interested watchers. "Couple of fellows wanted it, but I grabbed it and they scorned to hit a cripple." He smiled behind the court-plaster.

THAT afternoon there were show stunts by an aviator. All the hotel colony came to the field for the event. Cherry and John Carstairs walked down that way shortly after the hour when the flight was to have started. A man came hurrying out, looking worried.

"McWalters gone up yet?" asked John.

"Can't go up," answered the man. "Something wrong with the plane. Got to go to the village for more help."

John Carstairs' glance quickened; his easy-going attitude dropped from him like a cloak.

"Let me have a look at it. I've had a lot of experience with such things."

"We need the most expert help we can get, and quick as we can get it," said the man, doubtfully. "But go on in if you think you can help," he continued, while he himself hopped into a little car and headed for the village.

They went inside. Cherry was given a seat in the side-lines and John limped out into the field. McWalters turned, and from where she sat Cherry saw him start with surprise, and then his hand and John Carstairs' met in a hearty clasp. After that the men worked for twenty minutes, and then, amid lusty cheering, McWalters got away to a beautiful start and the afternoon was on. A vague feeling of injustice settled on Cherry, that all the applause was for the ace and none for the man who had made the flight possible.

Smudgy and greasy, John made his way back across the field.

"Let's stay and watch McWalters' stunts," he told her, while machinists from around the tool-box eyed him with respectful interest. "A fine fellow, McWalters," commented John "I was his machinist when I first went in the service."

All the way back to the hotel John talked nothing but engines and motors. Cherry didn't understand half of it, but that didn't seem to bother John. They passed Mrs. Jardine and her daughter, the latter walking with Twiny. They might not have existed, so far as John Carstairs was concerned. And as they stepped to their half of the roadway, John was saying in loud tones to Cherry:—

"Didn't I tell you I was a darned good mechanic, Cherry? Didn't I?" His face was flushed and held an odd look of pride.

Miss Jardine heard, recognized the star mechanic of the day, decided he was not the sort one knows, and passed up the walk beside the bored-appearing Twiny.

After dinner they strolled out again to their favourite bench beside the first tee. On the way down the walk they had to step aside for a small pyramid of trunks just dumped by the driver—the same driver who had brought John to the Imperial. The trunks were fast being carried in by the porters.

"'J. Wellington Crabtree,'" Cherry read aloud. "What a mouthful of name!"

"Poor devil!" agreed John.

"He's the guest of honour to-morrow night." She repeated what she had heard in the morning. "He's not only a famous ace, but a famous bachelor and very, very eligible, Mrs. Orr said. That's why the big ball is to be given for him to-morrow night."

"Because he's a famous bachelor or because he's a famous ace?"

"I think, John"—Cherry's face was solemn and she stopped short where she stood and emphasized her remarks with little nods of her head—"it's because he's rich—awfully rich."

"There, there, don't get all heated up against Crabtree just because of those people. He's probably the Crabtree I knew in the army. Not a half-bad sort, really. Only, he was Jack Crabtree then—no J. Wellington. That's his family's doings. And speaking of riches, Cherry," he went on quickly, "that reminds me; I've wired for some money. Don't let me forget to-morrow to give you back your note."

"You don't need to. I've got my ticket home."

HE smiled, and an indescribable feeling of panic came over Cherry. His smile was a thing to rejoice over. And after to-morrow she wouldn't see it again.

"You've been awfully good to me," she faltered. "I don't know how I'd have finished this holiday without you. I—I'll remember it always."

They were walking back to the hotel now. The moonlight was entrancing, the air balmy. Couples passed up and down, arm in arm; waltz music drifted out from the hotel. An utter content fell upon Cherry. But suddenly, as they mounted the steps, romance fled from her mind and reality entered with a thump.

"You can't dance to-morrow night," she gasped. "You—you haven't any evening clothes!"

He laughed at her concern. "Don't let that trouble you," he reassured. "I'll borrow some from the waiters. Decent fellow, one of those waiters, working his way through college and all that. He'll lend me his, I know, if I ask him."

All Saturday morning they guarded his bad leg, carefully conserving it for the evening. Preparations for the dance were going on all around them. It was to be the gala night of the season.

"We can thank J. Wellington Crabtree for to-night," gaily said Cherry to John as they sat on the piazza after luncheon.

"Then we'll give him a vote of thanks and call him a good old scout," declared John.

"By the way, I don't think he's arrived yet. I don't see anyone around who might be he."

"Oh, he's not so distinguished-looking," said John, in tones that drew Cherry's searching glance. Could it be that John was jealous of the guest of honour? She hastened to reassure him.

"For my part, I don't care whether he ever comes or not. But I just wouldn't have been able to stand it here to-day without you, John Carstairs. Everybody so happy and busy and looking forward to to-night."

"You'd be looking forward to to-night too."

"Yes—to being a wallflower, to sitting alone and looking on, my feet aching to dance, my heart aching with lonesomeness."

And John smiled the smile that was the worst heartache of all.

"What're you going to do to-morrow when I go?" she asked wistfully.

"To-morrow? Oh, to-morrow's another day. I—I hope to-morrow to have an appointment with my girl."

His girl! The day went black for Cherry. His girl! The death of joy, the end of dreams!

She strove to say something, but no words came. She merely sat looking at John.

"I'll tell you all about it to-night," said he, unaware of the havoc he had wrought.

"Yes, do," answered she, in her voice much of the icy quality affected by the ladies at the Imperial. Shortly afterward she excused herself, thought she'd lie down for a while. Immediately John rose.

"And I think I'll go to my linen-room," he said, "to pack."

"To pack!" Cherry cried, then laughed in spite of herself. He had nothing to pack.

As they approached the desk, a tall, good-looking young man stood registering. He was accompanied by another, apparently a valet. Several porters stood obsequiously about, laden with bags. Hoskins' face wore a rapt look; his manner had a touch of grandeur as he handed the young man the pen.

"J. Wellington Crabtree," Cherry thought, and turned to tell John Carstairs. But that gentleman had disappeared. She waited, irresolute. Not a sign of him anywhere.

THE orchestra was beginning to play just as she came down. Suppressed excitement everywhere. Even the Jardines seemed caught by it. Miss Jardine's features were—for them—lit up, and her mother wore a pleasantly preoccupied air. It seemed years since the night Cherry had been introduced to them.

Mrs. Orr, in passing, nodded to Miss Jardine. "Hope you'll have the first dance with him," she said.

A table for two was set conspicuously in the centre of the dining-room. Dinner was half over, and yet it remained unoccupied. Soft eyes, and hard, feverish glances and calculating ones, were turned upon it. Then suddenly he came—the young man Cherry had seen registering.

"Yes, looks as if he could have a good time even here among the icebergs," mused Cherry.

"Crabtree's cousin. Secretary of his or something. Always travels with him." A man at a table back of Cherry was speaking.

He came swiftly over to where she stood

"Where's Crabtree?" asked another.

"Got here late, I hear, and dining in his room."

Cherry could see nothing of John Carstairs—not that she was expecting to. She did hope he would get something to eat, and wondered how long it took waiters to get through their work and out of their clothes.

One window of the ballroom opened upon the most secluded corner of the piazza. It was here Cherry had promised to wait for John. She herself had suggested it. "I'll see how the clothes fit him," she thought. "I don't want him to be a laughing-stock before these people."

The orchestra was tuning up. Gay voices floated out through the windows; rich perfumes mingled with the natural fragrance of the night. Then the first strains of music. Ecstasy rose in Cherry's heart. She wished John would hurry.

And suddenly there he was! Cherry quickly made the mental notation that the waiter, whoever he was, must have been out of the ordinary, for the evening clothes were perfection. And the court-plaster was removed from John's face—the long scratches had faded into tiny lines. She had not thought he could look so handsome. That wretched other girl!

She rose, eager to go in, but John laid a detaining hand on her arm and drew her back into the shadows.

He surveyed her musingly, a peculiar look in his eyes. "Tell me, Cherry," he said, finally, "have I acquitted myself well? How do you think I've played the part?"

"The part? What part?"

"Why, the kidnapee, of course."

She smiled—sadly.

"You've been a dear, John." Her voice choked. "Without you I'd have died."

"Then you'd do it all over again? The kidnapping and nursing and all?"

by the window and held out his arms.

She nodded and hoped he wouldn't make her talk. He continued :—

"Because, if you're willing, I want to make it a permanent thing, Cherry—only on a fifty-fifty basis. Will you, dear ? "

"What do you mean ? "

"I to do the kidnapping and you the nursing—for always," he went on. "Do you think you could care enough ? "

There was no hint of mockery now in his eyes, nothing but dead serious earnest. Still, Cherry must be sure.

"You mean ? "

"I love you. I want you to take care of me always. Say it isn't too big a job. Say you'll do it, dear."

His strong, firm hands reached for hers, but she quickly withdrew her own.

"What about that girl ? " she asked, stonily.

"Girl ? What girl ? " he asked, perplexed.

"The girl you were going to see to-morrow."

"O-o-h ! " He smiled his winning smile. "Perhaps I was a little premature about that," he said, "but from something you said I'd begun to hope that by to-morrow I'd have a girl. Shall I, Cherry ? "

"Y-yes," said Cherry. "On-only I don't know your name—or—anything about you——"

"I'll tell you," began John, and tried to draw her head to his shoulder.

"No ! No ! " Cherry held him back. "I —I don't know who you are—and I "—her voice swelled tremulously—"and I don't care either."

A dance was ending. Cherry, her heart beating high, stood with John at the long open window. Dimly she was conscious of seeing Miss Jardine go by on the arm of Twiny.

"The next dance will be ours," John said,

" but I'll have to leave you for a few minutes first." He placed a chair for her just beside the window, and with a backward glance was gone.

She waited—waited a little longer. Finally she began to worry. John's few minutes were such long ones. She looked in through the window.

People were crowding around someone —polite-looking, interested groups.

" Crabtree's arrived." It was a voice inside the window, the same young man who had sat at the table opposite her at dinner. He was talking to a girl. " I'll introduce him as soon as we can get near him. Everybody wants to meet him."

CHERRY couldn't help contrasting J. Wellington Crabtree's reception with the one accorded herself—or the one bestowed upon John Carstairs. Poor John, everybody had looked right through him just as they had through herself. Prominently among the crowd fluttered Mrs. Jardine and her daughter, accompanied by the *blasé* Twiny.

" She'll drop you, Twiny, for Mr. Crabtree if she gets a chance. She's hoping for the first dance with him," said Cherry to herself, and wondered why John didn't come.

Finally the orchestra struck up—even the music had been stilled that introductions might be unhampered. The crowd thinned around the edges and began to disintegrate into couples. Where *was* John ? He had promised she should have every dance.

Just then the groups surrounding the lion fell back and the soft-eyed maidens registered a look of disappointment. Cherry wondered what had happened, and stepped in through the window. She strained for a look at Mr. Crabtree.

And as the groups opened, as the crowd separated to let him pass, she saw him—J. Wellington Crabtree, *alias* John Carstairs !

Cherry's heart stood still.

Straight toward her he came, out of the crowd that had gathered to meet him. In and out around the dancers, past scores of eyes that lingeringly sought to detain him, he came swiftly over to where she stood by the window and held out his arms.

At the end of the dance his cousin came up to them.

" I want to be presented." He smiled at Cherry. And later : " Jack tells me you've been Good Samaritan to him, Miss Mercer. It was better than he deserved—running off from us, as usual, without money or clothes. All he did was send a telegram that he'd meet us Saturday——"

" My dear Stoddard," John was drawling, " if you'd ever been kidnapped, you'd realize——" He stopped as an influx of people bore down on them.

" Oh, Mr. Crabtree, to think of your being here all the week and not a soul taking the slightest notice of you ! "

" You're wrong there," John answered. Cherry didn't hear what else he said, for a voice was sounding in her ears.

" Miss Mercer, it was unkind of you not to tell us." Cherry turned to look into the reproachful face of Mrs. Jardine.

" Yes, indeed, we could have had some nice parties together," simpered Miss Jardine.

Happily Cherry stood by. She marvelled at how very much icebergs could melt.

A compelling something drew her gaze to the door. On tiptoe, peering over the heads of the crowd, was Hoskins. His stricken face held all the puzzlement of all the ages. Cherry smiled. Again she heard his astonished " Alone ? " addressed to herself. Again she saw his face freeze, his glance grow cold at John's irresponsible facetiousness ; once more she heard him announcing that there wasn't a better room for John because everything had been reserved for J. Wellington Crabtree. Poor Hoskins ! How funny his face looked now ! How John had laughed at her fear of him !

BUT John was speaking. He was smiling at the crowd—his wonderful, ingratiating smile. " He'd get by with anybody, even if he was only a mechanic," thought Cherry quickly.

" And it's really awfully nice of you. I appreciate the honour you do me more than I can say. But I shall not be able to accept any invitations. You see, I'm going to be married—perhaps to-morrow—and——"

Softly, sweetly, tenderly, the cadences of the waltz rose and fell. John's arms reached for Cherry's waist. One by one the lights went out, leaving the room in a rosy twilight glow. The dancers dreamily glided, turned, and swayed.

For the last few bars the lights went entirely out and the room was in a dusky gloom.

" Kiss me, Cherry," said J. Wellington Crabtree. And Cherry, loving, honouring —obeyed.

W. G. GRACE

A MEMORY

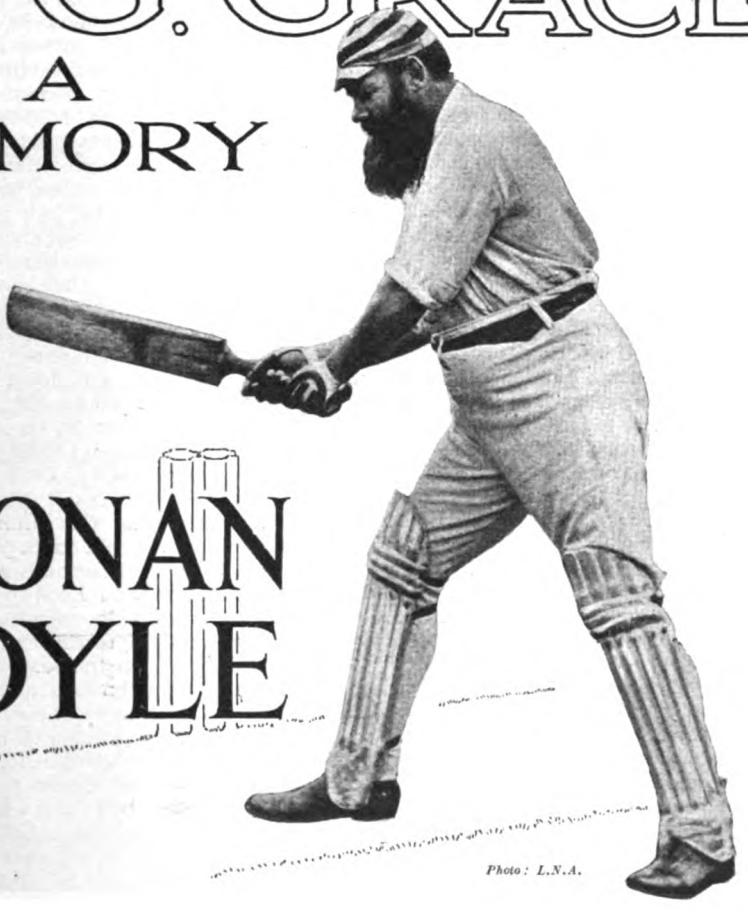


Photo: L.N.A.

By

A. CONAN DOYLE

TO those who knew W. G. Grace he was more than a great cricketer. He had many of the characteristics of a great man. There was a masterful generosity and a large direct simplicity and frankness which, combined with his huge frame, swarthy features, bushy beard, and a somewhat lumbering carriage, made an impression which could never be forgotten. In spite of his giant West-of-England build, there was, as it seemed to me, something of the gipsy in his colouring, his vitality, and his quick dark eyes with their wary expression. The bright yellow and red cap which he loved to wear added to this Zingari effect. His elder brother, the Coroner, small, wizened, dark, and wiry, had even more of this gipsy appearance. I speak, of course, only of the effect produced, for I have no reason to think that such blood was in his veins, though, following Borrow, I am ready to believe that there is no better in Europe.

There was a fine open-air breeziness of manner about the man which made his company a delight and added a zest to the game. He was, of course, a highly educated surgeon, but he had rather the fashion of talk which one would associate with a jovial farmer. His voice was high-pitched, considering the huge chest from which it came, and it preserved something of the Western burr. "Hullo, young 'un, a bit too good for you, that one!" "Never mind, my lad, you're not the first good man that has dropped an easy catch." "Shut your legs to it before you try to pick it up." These

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were the scraps of advice or consolation which he would shout—the voice was loud though high—to the youngster who needed admonition or sympathy.

His style and methods were peculiar to himself. In his youth, when he was tall, slim, and agile, he must have been as ideal in his form as in his results. But as this generation knew him he had run to great size and a certain awkwardness of build. It was amazing that a man who was capable of such exertions should carry such weight. As he came towards the wicket, walking heavily with shoulders rounded, his great girth outlined by his coloured sash, one would have imagined that his day was passed. "He may make his twenty or thirty," one thought, "and then Nature will dismiss him if the bowler fails." Never was there a greater fallacy. He seemed slow, stiff, and heavy at first. When he had made fifty in his quiet, methodical fashion, he was somewhat younger and fresher. At the end of a century he had not turned a hair, and was watching the ball with as clear an eye as in the first over. Younger batsmen might tire and grow ragged in their strokes, but never the old man. It was his advice to play every ball as if it were the first—and he lived up to it. There was no feeling for the ball, no half hits or wild slogs. Everything that he did was firm, definite, and well within his strength.

I HAVE had the privilege of fielding at point more than once while he made his hundred, and have in my mind a clear impression of his methods. I do not know if he took the centre or the leg guard, or the point between them, but he actually stood very clear of his wicket, bending his huge shoulders and presenting a very broad face of the bat towards the bowler. Then as he saw the latter advance he would slowly raise himself to his height and draw back the blade of his bat, while his left toe would go upwards until only the heel of that foot remained upon the ground. He gauged the pitch of the ball in an instant, and if it were doubtful played back rather than forward. Often he smothered a really dangerous length ball by a curious half-cock stroke to which he was partial. He took no risks, and in playing forward trailed the bottom of his bat along the grass as it advanced so as to guard against the shooter—a relic no doubt of his early days in the 'sixties, when shooters were seen more often than on modern grounds.

The great strength of his batting was upon the offside. I should not suppose that there was ever a batsman who was so good at controlling that most uncontrollable of all balls, the good-length ball outside the off stump. He would not disregard it, as is the modern habit. It was, indeed, seldom that he let a ball pass without offering at it. He did not flinch from it as a foe, but rather welcomed it as a friend, and stepping across the wicket while bending his great shoulders he watched it closely as it rose, and patted it with an easy tap through the slips. In vain with a fast bumpy bowler pounding them down did three quivering fieldsmen crouch in the slips, their hands outstretched and eager for the coming catch. Never with the edge of the bat, but always with the true centre, would he turn the ball groundwards, so that it flashed down and then fizzed off between the grasping hands, flying with its own momentum to the boundary. With incredible accuracy he would place it according to the fields, curving it off squarely if third man were not in his place or tapping it almost straight down upon the ground if short-slip were standing wide of the wicket. In no shot was he so supremely excellent, and, like all great things, it seemed simplicity itself as he did it. Only when one saw other great batsmen fail did one realize how accurate was the timing and the wrist-work of the old man. When he was well on towards his sixtieth year I have seen him standing up to Lockwood when man after man was helpless at the other wicket, tapping those terrific expresses away through the slips with the easy sureness with which one would bounce a tennis ball with a racket. Nor was he ever to be frightened by the most dangerous bowler. Poised and firm, he never flinched, but turned the rising ball to leg or patted it to the off. The fastest bowler in England sent one like a cannon-shot through his beard, with only a comic shake of the head and a good-humoured growl in reply.

It was in this command of the off ball and in his perfect defence that his great merit lay, but there was no stroke at which he was not adept. With his true eye he hit a larger proportion of leg balls than any other man. He stepped back and struck them off his legs not with a whole-hearted swing, but with a sharp, decisive turn of the wrists, watching the ball to the last instant. The only shot which he produced less frequently than his contemporaries was the big sixer, beloved of the crowd. He seldom ventured that great effort, which has an equal chance of ending on the pavilion or in the hands of cover-point. His batting was always well within his strength, and though an analysis of his scores will show that he found the boundary as often as anyone, he never gave the impression that he was hitting hard.

I think that when he was well set the best

chance of getting rid of him may have been to serve him up with something so delectable that he might be tempted into a liberty. This theory occurred to me after watching him play seven professional bowlers of all paces and types until he had topped the hundred. Since the best had failed, I thought I would try the other variety—I was captaining an M.C.C. team upon that day—so I ventured upon an experimental over. It succeeded to a marvel. A half volley upon the off with all the fielders upon the off side tempted him to sweep it round to the on. For once he got it on the edge and it went an amazing height perpendicularly into the air, and then down into the hands of Storer, the Derbyshire wicket-keeper. The old man laughed and shook his head at me. He was thinking probably that it was the worst ball that ever got his wicket, but he was too polite to say so. He was not always polite, however. I can remember that in the second innings of the same match he was given out leg-before to Cranfield, a left-handed bowler, bowling round the wicket. I forget who the umpire was, but the old man was very angry. I can see him now with his thick, padded, and somewhat bandy legs, marching towards the pavilion, but his face and beard turned over his right shoulder while he glared back and rumbled all sorts of comminations. His temper grew somewhat shorter, I fancy, during his latter days. It is not surprising when one considers the strain of a succession of three-day matches upon a man of his age. At his normal he was a cheery, boyish-hearted, and boisterous man, the jolliest of playmates.

The teams in the London County v. M.C.C. Match. The illustration shows Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and W. G. Grace in the same picture.

Photo: Russell & Sons.

Of his bowling I have very clear recollections. He was an innovator among bowlers, for he really invented the leg theory a genera-

tion before it was rediscovered and practised by Vine, Armstrong, and others. Grace's traps at leg were proverbial in the 'seventies. His manner was peculiar. He would lumber up to the wicket and toss up the ball in a take-it-or-leave-it style, as if he cared little whether it pitched between the wickets or in the next parish. As a matter of fact this careless attitude covered a very remarkable accuracy. His command of length was absolute, and he had just enough leg spin to beat the bat if you played forward to the pitch of the ball. He was full of guile, and the bad ball which was worth four to you was sent, as likely as not, to unsettle you and lead you on. Never shall I forget three successive balls which I received from him, the graduated stages of a trap which was my undoing and my ruin. The first was a dropping half-volley which no one could help hitting for four. The next looked exactly the same, and I had pranced out to it before I realized that it was really somewhat shorter. I hit at it none the less, and with some luck and a sidelong shot scored another four. The third seemed far the most tempting of the three. No child could have lobbed up anything more seductive. Only when I was ten feet down the pitch did I realize the effect was produced by a higher trajectory, and that the ball was really so short that I could not get at the pitch of it. It shot past me with a little top spin to put devil into it, and I heard the squawk of "How's that?" as Lilley put down my wicket. There was the old man rubbing his great brown hands and wagging his beard in laughter as I marched sadly home to the dressing-room.

"He would lumber up to the wicket and toss up the ball in a take-it-or-leave-it style."

Photo: Russell & Sons.

Those who knew him will never look at the classic sward of Lord's without an occasional vision of the great cricketer. One can see him in many typical attitudes. Most clearly perhaps he appears coming down the pavilion steps, with ten thousand people clapping as the red and yellow cap, the huge stooping shoulders, and the famous black beard emerge from the open door. Very clearly also can one recall him when he was dissatisfied with the wicket and had detected some danger spot which the roller had missed. He would squat out on the pitch, sitting on his heels, and slapping away with his bat to flatten out the trouble. Most clearly of all, however, one sees his big figure in the centre of an after-luncheon group, and as one approaches one hears again that jolly voice and roar of infectious laughter. He was and will remain the very impersonation of cricket, redolent of fresh air, of good humour, of conflict without malice, of chivalrous strife, of keenness for victory by fair means and utter detestation of all that were foul. Few men have done more for the generation in which he lived, and his influence was none the less because it was a spontaneous and utterly unconscious one.

PIECES OF SILVER

By

RICHARD CONNELL

Illustrated by
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I.

ONCE in every seven years Bouloire lives. That is the year the peasants of the village give the Easter play. Every seventh year they have given it since it was written for them by the monk Rutebeuf, author of mediæval mysteries, two hundred and more years before Columbus found a new world.

The Easter play is the soul of Bouloire; it is the village's reason for being, and, likewise, its chief source of support. The nine hundred citizens of Bouloire consider the play the most sacred thing in their lives. A part in it, however minor, is to them more precious than the jewels of all the kings. For six years they work quietly in their fields, at their wood-carvers' benches, or at their potters' wheels, and Bouloire, modestly secreted in a valley well off the main roads, is little visited. To the few who chance to pass that way it seems like a hundred other hamlets in the South of France. In its small, rough-plastered, red-roofed cottages live simple, kindly folk who love their homes, work hard, and are poor. In those years the world sees little of them, nor they of it.

But the seventh year, that is different. Then the world comes to Bouloire to see the tillers of the fields and the carvers of wood and the makers of pottery, turned actors now, re-enact the old, but never old, story of Bethlehem, Nazareth, Gethsemane, Golgotha.

In an outdoor theatre they give their Easter play. All good men, women, and children take part; some few who have not been good are not permitted to act, and that, in the eyes of Bouloire, is the bitterest of disgraces. The important *rôles* have been handed down from father to son for many generations, and are deemed priceless heritages. Thus, the part of Christus has been played by a Jean Bodel for three hundred years; a member of the Chesnaye family has been Petrus for centuries, and the chief dramatic *rôle*, Judas, has always been played by a Greban. It was commonly said that Arnoul Greban, the latest Judas, with his spare, sharp-cornered figure, his bold hawk nose, and his red flame of beard, was the greatest Judas of them all.

He was not, of course, much of an actor. None of them was. It was the tradition that the Easter players should not have professional direction or coaching. There was a certain power about the acting of Arnoul Greban, but it was crude power. The play itself was crude. The thirteenth-century monk who wrote it had brought out its religious rather than its dramatic values. And yet he had not been wholly without dramatic insight, for he had written at least one strong *rôle* and at least one unusually vivid and moving scene. The *rôle* was Judas, and the scene the betrayal in the garden of Gethsemane and the remorse of the betrayer.

Hard times, of late, had come to Bouloire. There was a drought. The unrelenting sun of the Midi parched the hillsides, singeing the grass to brown dust. Lambs died. The grape crop was blighted. Fewer visitors than ever came to buy the bowls with peasant figures painted on them that Arnoul Greban made, or the little pine statues of the saints that others carved. The men and women and children of the village began to know hunger.

It was Mrs. Casterbridge who first suggested the idea that shocked Bouloire's people, and yet fascinated them. She had long been a friend of Bouloire. She had attended two Easter plays and was fond of the village and its people. As she went down the long main street of the village that hot, powdery day, it struck her that Bouloire very much needed help; and yet she knew that no gift from her would have been accepted. They were proud, these artisan-actors. They loved their home village too much to

let it take a stranger's money. They must be given a chance to help themselves. An idea came to Mrs. Casterbridge.

In his tiny workshop she found Arnoul Greban putting the last deft touches on a bowl. She had come to him because he was the first man of the village; he was its mayor, and almost as proud of that title as of the fact that he played Judas in the Easter play. Arnoul Greban greeted her with simple dignity and brought her a low bench to sit on. He was a man nearing fifty. He wore a faded blue smock and wooden shoes, his work clothes; and yet Mrs. Casterbridge noticed, as she had noticed before, that there was something about him that might almost be called a touch of dandyism. Was it because his red hair and beard had been carefully combed and arranged? Was it the fact that he had had his smock cut to show off his erect figure? Or was it the fact that he was the only peasant she had ever seen who shined his wooden shoes?

When Mrs. Casterbridge outlined to him her plan for helping Bouloire, he laid aside his brush and a look of alarm came into his eyes.

"But, Madame, it is impossible," he said, "impossible."

What Mrs. Casterbridge had proposed to him was that he and twenty other important characters in the Easter play should come to New York. There were many pious and interested people there, she said, who had heard of the Easter play, but could not come to France to see it. They would gladly pay to see the men who were actors in the historic play.

"Madame is very kind," said Arnoul Greban, "and Bouloire is grateful; but you must not ask Bouloire to give away its soul."

"Americans are rich," said Mrs. Casterbridge. "They would save Bouloire from want."

"Bouloire is rich," replied Arnoul Greban, "so long as it keeps its Easter play. Do you see that box, Madame?"

He pointed to a large carved chest in a corner. She nodded.

"It is full of letters from America offering us great wealth for our play. Only last month a man in New York wrote to say he would pay us a million francs if we would act our play for the pictures that move."

"And what was your answer, Monsieur Greban?"

He smiled at her.

"On a very big piece of paper," he said, "I wrote one word—NEVER. Then everyone in the village who can write signed his or her name beneath the word."

"What you did was right," Mrs. Casterbridge assured him, "but you have not understood my plan. I do not mean you should come to New York to act your play. I mean you should come merely as wood-carvers and potters to sell your statues and pottery. You sell your handiwork here. Surely there would be no harm in selling it in New York?"

HE did not speak for many minutes, but sat fingering the unfinished bowl, staring at it, thinking. Finally he said:—

"We are poor men, and men most ignorant, Madame. Not one of us has ever been more than ten miles from home. America is across a great sea, is it not? We should not know what to do there. To go so far, to be among strangers in a strange land, that would make us very much afraid, Madame."

"Afraid, Monsieur Greban? Of what? You would be among friends; that I can assure you."

"We are simple men," he said. "We try to live our lives in an unworldly way, to live them plainly as did the great ones whose parts we have the honour to play in the Easter play. Your New York—it might not be good for us."

Mrs. Casterbridge smiled.

"New York can hurt men," she said, "but it could not hurt you and the others. Is there no other reason why you think you should not come? A month in New York would mean large sales of your wares, and food and comforts for your village."

To his eyes that look of alarm returned.

"Forgive me, Madame," he said. "The idea makes me a little afraid. You, I trust. But the others——"

"What others, Monsieur Greban?"

"There must be men of many kinds in New York," he replied, "good men and bad men. There are the rich men who would see in us only a new way to make money. There are the men who make the pictures that move. There are the police—"

"The police, Monsieur Greban?"

"When we are in New York," he said, "with the sea between us and our homes, might not your police make us act our Easter play?"

Mrs. Casterbridge laughed.

"Of course not," she said. "You would be treated as honoured guests. Before you left Bouloire, it would be agreed exactly what you are to do in America. You would certainly not be asked to do anything you did not wish to do. You will come to New York as wood-carvers and potters, with your work to sell. In a great hall you would display your wares, and I can promise you that thousands of people would come to

In his tiny workshop she found Arnoul Greban putting the last deft touches on a bowl.

see your work and to see you making your bowls and statues. I think I can safely say that a month in New York would mean three or four hundred thousand francs for Bouloire."

His eyes widened. He let them wander to the street, where thin children tried listlessly to play.

"They have not enough milk, those children," he said. "Our bread it is black, and sometimes it is not at all. I will think about your gracious offer, Madame. I will talk it over with the others. To-morrow we shall see——"

NEVER in its long history had Bouloire been so torn as it was that night. To its fourteenth-century village church came the citizens of Bouloire in stiff, clean blouses and hard, black Sunday hats to debate the question. Sides were taken, speeches made. The hours of the night passed in earnest discussion. Having placed Mrs. Casterbridge's proposal before them, Arnoul Greban declared that he was opposed to it. He would, of course, abide by the vote of the majority. If they decided that they wished to go to America to sell their wares, with Mrs. Casterbridge and other generous New-Yorkers underwriting the cost of the trip, he, too, would go. However, he harboured grave doubts about the wisdom of going.

"The Easter play," he said, "is God's gift to us. It is a holy thing. It would be a sin to let it be seen in strange places by irreverent eyes."

There was a nodding of heads.

"But," interposed Jean Bodel, "we are

not to give the play or any part of it over there. We go simply to sell our work."

"You know little of the world, Jean," returned Arnoul Greban. "When we get there, they will try to make us give our play. It is not our poor statues and bowls New York wants to see. It is our play."

"But we need not give it, no matter what they say to us or do to us," argued Jean Bodel. "We are not children who can be forced to act; nor are we puppets who obey when a string is pulled. No one of us need act unless he does so of his own free will."

"I have always heard it said," muttered Arnoul Greban in his red beard, "that New York is a city of temptations."

"Have no worries about that," exclaimed Jean Bodel. "I will swear, and so will all the rest of us, an oath most solemn that we will do no acting of any sort in America. Will that end your fears, Arnoul Greban?"

Arnoul Greban shrugged his shoulders.

"We will swear," went on Jean Bodel, "by our love for our homes that we will do no acting."

"There will be those," said Arnoul Greban, 'who will try to make you break your vow."

"We will laugh at them," cried Jean Bodel. "And if any of us should be weak and should forget his pledge, the penalty shall be that that unhappy one shall never return to his home here, but shall henceforth be an outcast and a wanderer on the face of the earth."

It was on this condition that the Easter players of Bouloire agreed to come to New York.

Before the altar of the bare, white-walled Gothic church, just as the first light of a new day was flowing in a coloured stream through the rose-windows, the chief actors of the Easter play, their faces set in serious purpose, laid their work-hardened hands on the great ancient Bible and swore that they would be true to the Easter-play traditions while in America, that no one of them would appear as an actor, and that, if any of them did, that man would be for ever a pariah.

II.

IN New York's most spacious exhibition hall, in a booth made to look like his own tiny plaster cottage in Bouloire, sat Arnoul Greban at his potter's wheel. His smock was worn and clay-stained, but he wore it with an air of distinction. His blazing beard and hair had been carefully dressed; one suspected the use of scent. He was tired, for all day he had sat there making bowls while a curious crowd watched. Now and then they said to one another, "He should be able to act his part well." That was when they looked at his face.

The visitors had nearly all gone home now, for it was closing time. One man remained in the booth of Arnoul Greban, and his sharp black eyes were not on the potter's busy fingers. It was the face of Arnoul Greban he watched, an articulate face, lean, white, intense, breaking abruptly into a fire of beard. This man who lingered was short, fat, with very good clothes, and in his tie a diamond pin glittered. When no one was near, he came quite close to Arnoul Greban and spoke in a low voice, in halting French:—

"May I have the honour of addressing certain words to Monsieur Greban?" he asked.

"Certainly," replied Arnoul Greban.

"It is growing late," the man said. "One cannot talk at one's ease here. Will you not come with me to my apartment? It is near by, in Park Avenue."

"But I always go directly to the hotel with the others," demurred Arnoul Greban.

"Monsieur is timid?" suggested the stranger, showing white teeth in a slight smile.

"Oh, no," said Greban, and laughed.

"It is a matter most important," said the stranger, urgently. "Come; it will take but half an hour to tell you."

"But the nature of your business, Monsieur?"

"I cannot tell you here," said the stranger, hastily. "See, they are beginning to turn out the lights. Will you come?"

"But I do not know Monsieur," objected Arnoul Greban, hanging up his smock and putting on his best black coat. He noted ruefully that it was shiny and turning green.

Somewhat hesitantly the stranger produced a card from a gold-rimmed card-case and held it out toward Arnoul Greban, but did not give it to him. Arnoul Greban knit his brows and made out the man's name:

"S. IRONSTONE."

In one corner in small type appeared the words,

"The Ironstone Enterprises, Inc.
Broadway and 42d St."

Arnoul Greban was trying to read this when the man, with a magician's dexterity, returned the card to the case, and the case to his pocket.

"I am interested in your work, Monsieur Greban," he said, "very interested."

"My work?" said Arnoul Greban, pleased. He looked at his array of bowls. They were ordinary bowls; one could have duplicated them in a dozen New York stores.

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Ironstone. "That's what I want to talk to you about."

Arnoul Greban considered. After all, this was a matter of business.

"I could come for a little time," he said, "but I must tell the others."

Far down the hall, now dim, he could see the other Easter players gathering at the front door, waiting for him. He felt Mr. Ironstone's hand on his arm.

"It is not necessary to tell the others," said Mr. Ironstone. "I will detain you but a few moments. Surely Monsieur is not so young he needs still a nurse?"

"But——" began Arnoul Greban.

"This way," said Mr. Ironstone, steering the other. "The side door. My car is waiting there."

"This is a very fine car, Monsieur," said Greban as they slid smoothly along.

"It is the best car in the world," said Mr. Ironstone.

Arnoul Greban's eyes were like a child's at a Christmas-tree. "Such a car must cost a very great deal."

"Twenty-four thousand dollars," Mr. Ironstone told him. "That's nearly half a million francs to-day."

Arnoul Greban sighed. He was watching the stately panorama of Park Avenue.

"Tell me," said Mr. Ironstone, "do you make much money by your work?"

Arnoul Greban shook his head.

"In the old days," he said, "when many visitors came to Bouloire and I worked very hard at my wheel, I sometimes made fifteen francs in a day."

"Oh, I meant by your acting," said Mr. Ironstone.

"For that," said Arnoul Greban, "I receive nothing."

"Nothing?"

"Yes. The money goes to the village."

Mr. Ironstone pursed his lips and whistled sadly.

THEY had reached the vast granite building where Mr. Ironstone had his apartment. Arnoul Greban had never been in so luxurious a place as that apartment. He had never trod on such thick carpets; he had never sat in such soft chairs; he had never drunk such delicious wine as the wine a Japanese servant brought him in a thin crystal glass. Greban stole secret, reproachful glances at his frayed trousers. Mr. Ironstone's eyes were watching Arnoul Greban's eyes.

"You like my little place?" asked Mr. Ironstone.

"It is a place most charming," answered Arnoul Greban. "I thought only kings lived in such places."

"We are all kings in New York," said Mr. Ironstone—"kings or wise men. Money grows here, you know. One need only learn how to pick it up."

"Monsieur, then, has learned how?"

Mr. Ironstone chuckled.

"You are intelligent, Monsieur Greban," he said. "Almost too intelligent to be a good actor, and yet you are a good actor."

"I?"

"Yes, you are a splendid actor. With training you could be a great one."

Arnoul Greban played with his wine-glass.

"Monsieur is too kind," he murmured. "And how does Monsieur know?"

"I saw you act Judas in the last Easter play in Bouloire," replied Mr. Ironstone. "That is why I wanted to talk to you to-night. You have a great gift, Monsieur Greban."

Arnoul Greban bowed.

"It is a pity," went on Mr. Ironstone, "not to let more of the world enjoy that gift."

"The world can come to Bouloire five years from now," said Arnoul Greban.

"It can't," returned Mr. Ironstone. "That's too bad, but it's so. Ah, well, I suppose there's no help for it. America, with all its love of beauty, with all its wealth, seems fated never to see the great Arnoul Greban play Judas as he alone can play him."

"Monsieur is more than flattering," said Arnoul Greban "His praise warms me even more than this excellent wine. But, alas! what he says is true. I can only act in Bouloire, and that but once in seven years."

"A pity," remarked Mr. Ironstone. "A great pity. You must like to act, Monsieur Greban; you act so well."

"Ah, Monsieur, acting is with me a passion, but one should not have passions, I suppose, or, if he has them, one should curb them."

"Some passions," observed Mr. Ironstone, "are good ones. The world is poorer, Monsieur, because you can indulge your passion for acting only three or four times in your lifetime, and then in an out-of-the-way place."

Arnoul Greban was gazing at some graceful Viennese vases on the mantel.

"These are lovely vases," he said. "One must be happy who can afford to surround himself with beautiful things in so comfortable a place."

"Five years ago," said Mr. Ironstone, "I had nothing. America has given all this to me. America will give as much, and more, to any man who will give America something she wants."

"But not all men have a something," said Arnoul Greban.

"You have," said Mr. Ironstone, warmly. "Your art as an actor."

Arnoul Greban gazed at the Viennese vases.

"But that, of course, I could not sell," he said.

"Of course not," agreed Mr. Ironstone. "There's that oath, for one thing."

"How do you know about that oath?" demanded Arnoul Greban. "Have you talked with Jean Bodel or any of the others?"

"Won't you have another glass of wine?" said Mr. Ironstone. He poured another glass for Arnoul Greban from an engraved carafe.

"Between us," said Mr. Ironstone, "the others do not interest me. They are not like you. They are not intelligent men. They have the minds of children. They could never understand the sort of world we live in. But you, Monsieur Greban, you are a man, and though you have not come much in contact with the world, still you are a man of the world. Your good health and prosperity, Monsieur."

Arnoul Greban sipped his wine, and his eyes followed the outlines of the handsome tapestried sofa on which his host sat. Without looking at Mr. Ironstone, he said:—

"And actors in America, they are well paid, I suppose?"

"Very well indeed," Mr. Ironstone answered. "I should know, too. You see, Monsieur Greban, I am connected with the stage in a business way. In fact, I own a number of theatres. Now, to give your question a concrete answer, let me take your own case. Let us suppose you were interested in acting in America. I know, of course, you are not. But, if I thought you were, I'd come to you and say: 'Monsieur Greban, you are a great artiste, and America wants to see you play Judas. If you will act the betrayal scene from the Easter play in the American theatres for only twenty minutes, twice a day, I will agree to pay you fifteen hundred dollars a week.' Let's see—that's about twenty-nine thousand francs a week, or nearly five thousand francs a day."

"Five thousand francs a day," repeated Arnoul Greban.

"And, if that interested you," went on Mr. Ironstone, swiftly, "I'd give you a five-year contract. Yes, a five-year contract, calling for"—he scratched figures on the back of an envelope—"more than seven hundred and fifty thousand francs a year."

He held out the envelope so that Arnoul Greban could see the figures.

"But, of course," said Mr. Ironstone, with a sigh, "you wouldn't be interested." He left the envelope in Arnoul Greban's hand. Arnoul finished his wine and put the envelope into the pocket of his ancient coat.

"I said I would detain you only half an hour," said Mr. Ironstone, briskly. "I'm a man of my word. Ask anybody in the theatrical world. Well, good night, Monsieur Greban. Thank you for coming. I hope I'll see you again soon. Here's my telephone number. Drop in any evening for a glass of wine and a chat. My motor-car is waiting downstairs to take you to your hotel. Good night, Monsieur Greban."

The motor-car was waiting. As he sank into the lavender softness of its upholstery, Arnoul Greban stroked the yielding fabric with his calloused hand. It was certainly a very fine car.

When the Easter players sailed for home, Arnoul Greban did not sail with them. One would not have known from anything they said that his absence had been noticed. They did not speak of him at all.

III.

IT was the second week in May in the year of the Easter play. Five years had passed since the Easter players had gone to America and come back, and the money they had made by their sales in New York had dwindled away.

It was Bouloire's year, and yet their hearts were heavy. Although the weather was kind and the mild spring air was filled with the scent of grape blossoms, few visitors were coming to see the Easter play. The black shadow of failure hung over the village. They did not like to think that it was because the play was poor that no one came to see it. True, the critics who witnessed the Easter play the first day wrote in their papers that the play was flat and spiritless. Monte Carlo and Paris were neither flat nor spiritless; to them the tourists were flocking, but not to Bouloire. They were less pious than their fathers, these visitors; they sought entertainment, thrills. Jean Bodel groaned as he saw row after row of empty benches in the outdoor theatre. He knew that if the play failed financially, as seemed inevitable now, it would mean want in the village, for Bouloire had gone heavily in debt to buy new costumes and scenery and to prepare for the play. And if it failed artistically, he knew it would break Bouloire's heart. Yet that seemed inevitable, too.

The critics had said that the actors played their parts stiffly and without feeling. They said that Jean Bodel seemed at times only a querulous old man. As for Criquet,

He held out the envelope so that Arnoul Greban could see the figures, and left it in his hand.

who now played Judas, he did his best, no doubt, but his best was pitiful. He did not seem to understand his part, they said; he floundered; he was wooden.

"Criquet," wrote one Paris critic, "tries desperately to play Judas, but he convinces no one with his remorse. At best he seems mildly sorry for what he has done. He betrays his Master as casually as if it were a commonplace matter, like taking a glass of wine. When he returns the thirty pieces of silver to the high priests, he appears to do so reluctantly, and his remorse is often little more than whimpering or polite regret. And yet one feels that the man, if stirred, could give a performance of the *rôle* comparable with Arnoul Greban's or some of the other great Judases of the past."

No one was more acutely miserable about his failure than Criquet himself. He had been pressed into service as Judas because he had the only red beard in the village. He was fattish, good-natured, lazy, fond of cognac. He realized that the success of the Easter play depended on him, and he said, again and again: "I do my best, but I do not know how. I was away in the army when the last Easter play was given. I never saw the part played. I do my best."

On the second day of the third week there was a faint show of hope in Bouloire. At least one person from the outside world had arrived to see the Easter play. The stranger was, evidently, a man of wealth. His sleek top-hat bespoke affluence; his well-cut clothes on his well-fed body sang of success; the diamond pin in his silk tie glittered testimony to his prosperity. His plump, clean-shaven cheeks were bill-boards that advertised that he had lived well. Furthermore, he came into the village not on the rheumatic train from Avignon, but in an impressively powerful motor-car of regal proportions and imperial appointments. This equipage dazzled the youth of Bouloire, who clustered about it as it stood in front of the Hotel Daudet, the modest village inn.

The rich man bought himself a whole box at the Easter play, and sat there, watching the play intently. When Criquet bungled through the betrayal scene, the stranger's face, which was red, became purple. He squirmed in his seat as if in pain. He seemed on the point of leaving the theatre; he picked up his hat, gloves, stick. Then he appeared to change his mind, for he slumped down into his box again and chewed his thick lips.

IV.

WHEN all the village was asleep that night, a rather stout man in silk-stockinged feet stole down the stairs of the Hotel Daudet and, displaying a surprising knowledge of the intricate back alleys of the town, made his stealthy way to a small cottage in the outskirts where Criquet tossed in uneasy sleep. The stout man carried in one hand a small leather satchel such as bill-collectors carry. On reaching the home of Criquet, the stout man pushed the door open and went in. A light was lit, and the blinds were closed. There was a rumble of voices in the little house. When the stout man came out at dawn, and hurriedly made his way back to the hotel, he was not impeded by the satchel.

Jean Bodel called Criquet to him that morning. There was excitement in the eyes and voice of Jean Bodel. Criquet did not seem at all well. He seemed to tremble as Jean Bodel addressed him.

"I did not sleep," Criquet explained.

"Jacques Criquet," said Jean Bodel, "I beg you to do your best this day of all days."

"I always do my best," mumbled Criquet.

"Then to-day, in Heaven's name, do better than your best."

"To-day? What is to-day?"

"Everything depends on to-day," said Jean Bodel. "To-day, by moving heaven and earth, I have had come here writers from the great papers of Paris and London. I begged them to come, saying: 'Judge again our Easter play. We have improved it since the first day.' They have come. They will see our play. If they can truly write that it is good, Europe will come to see it. If we act poorly, we are lost. Act as you never dreamed you could act to-day, I implore you, Jacques Criquet."

Criquet avoided the other's eyes.

"I'll do my best," he said.

"I wish," cried Jean Bodel, "that you had committed a crime. I wish you had a sense of guilt. If only you had done something more wicked than taking a glass too much of cognac! Are you well, Jacques Criquet? You seem pale."

"I'm all right," muttered Criquet.

"Listen!" exclaimed Jean Bodel. "The noon bells are striking. In an hour the Easter play starts. It may be the last Easter play Bouloire will ever see. That rests with you. Put your soul into your acting. Oh, Jacques Criquet, if only you would kill someone between now and then, so that you would really feel remorse!"

Henri Roqueplan, of *Le Matin* of Paris, and T. D. A. Hollingshead, of the London *Times*, sat together in a box at the Easter play.

"I hear it's pretty terrible," whispered Hollingshead.

"I fear so," replied Roqueplan. "Judas is a dummy. A good Judas can make the play, and a poor one—*mon Dieu!*"

The Easter play moved slowly at first. The little party of visiting journalists looked at one another resignedly and stifled yawns. Jean Bodel and the others were doing the best acting they had ever done, but the play lacked pulse, momentum. Then Judas made his first appearance and spoke his first few lines. The critics ceased looking at one another; they began to watch Judas.

"By Jove!" whispered Hollingshead, "that chap has old Greban's voice."

"Impossible," whispered back Roqueplan. "Greban is in the States. He's an outcast, you know."

"But, look here, that fellow can act."

"What a face!" murmured the Paris critic. "Judas to the life!"

They began to realize, all of them, that not in the Odéon, not in the Comédie Française, or in any playhouse in London or New York, had they ever seen more finished and eloquent acting than they were watching on that rude outdoor stage in an out-of-the-way French village. Judas held them. With every gesture, every look, every intonation of his voice he riveted their attention, and made them live his story with him.

"What an incredible fellow!" exclaimed Roqueplan between scenes. "He is inspired; he must be. He is an amateur, a peasant, and yet he has at his finger-tips every trick of acting Coquelin or Guitry ever had. Such perfection! One would think he had played that *rôle* every day for the last five years!"

"He has more than skill," said Hollingshead. "He has sincerity. He is not playing that part, Roqueplan. He is living it."

"I saw tears in your eyes, Hollingshead," said Roqueplan.

"I have a cold," growled the English critic. "And so, it seems, have you."

The final scene of the Easter play began.

"Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

"Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? See thou *to that.*

"And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself."

They were not easily moved, these writers for the newspapers. A certain attitude of being *blasé* was ever part of their stock in trade; but they forgot to be anything but themselves in that last scene when Judas came in with slow and tortured steps to bring back the thirty pieces of silver. Perhaps, for the first time in the lives of any of them, they did not remember that they were in a theatre. When Judas, with bent head and anguished voice, drew near and addressed the chief priests and the elders, when he pleaded with them to take back the handful of money that was the price of his soul, they knew that it was not acting. It was living. By a magic they were, all of them, living in another and a distant land, two thousand years away, and the high priests were real high priests, and Judas the real Judas.

They heard the chief priest cry in his great, disdainful bass:—

"What is that to us? See thou *to that.*"

Judas turned away, and they saw the face of Judas. They knew that they were seeing a face in hell. They heard his words, dazed, broken, uncertain at first, then mounting to a rush of bitterest remorse. They saw him, with one last long wordless cry, rush off. They hardly heard the apostle pronounce the last words of the play:—

"The soul of him that betrayed his trust shall never again know peace. Let his habitation be desolate; and let no man dwell therein."

The men from the newspapers sat still in their seats, looking at one another. Each one did not want the other to see how much he had been moved. Then Roqueplan broke the silence.

"What I am going to write will make all Europe come to the Easter play," he cried.

They all nodded absently. They were already sketching out in their own minds what they would say of the art of Judas.

V.

EVENING was coming down gently on Bouloire. A high-powered motor-car stopped outside the cottage of Criquet. Criquet jumped up to meet the stout, top-hatted man who entered the house.

"I see it now," cried Criquet. "I see the part; I hid and watched how you did it. And I can play it now; I know remorse. For God's sake, Arnoul, I beg you take this back."

Criquet thrust out a small satchel.

The stout man shook his head.

"No," he said; "you must keep it. You must keep your remorse."

He turned quickly and leaped into the car. It started away like a startled tiger.

At the other end of the village the prosperous man said a word, and the car stopped in front of a cottage, small and plain, like the others in the village, but, unlike the others, empty, with unmended roof and broken window-panes. The children who had been born in that house and had lived there till they had gone to homes of their own never visited it now; that was clear.

The man in the big car sat looking at the little house a long time. The chauffeur heard the man's voice, saying aloud :—

"Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein."

"Beg pardon; what did you say, sir?" asked the chauffeur.

"Nothing," growled the man. "Drive on."

"Where to, sir?"

"Monte Carlo, Paris, the devil. What does it matter?"

When Judas came in with slow and tortured steps to bring back the thirty pieces of silver, the critics knew that it was not acting. It was living!

ZOOLOGICAL HUMOUR

IN a cage at the Zoo two monkeys were seated side by side gazing solemnly through the wire netting at the throng of visitors.

"I wonder what they are thinking?" I remarked to a keeper.

The keeper, who understood the minds of monkeys, smiled.

"They're thinking that it's a darned good job we put up those wires to keep the people out," he said.

Which shows that there are two sides even to the question of what constitutes humour at the Zoological Gardens.

"I don't mind telling you," continued the keeper, "that some of these animals laugh at the people just as often as the people laugh at them. Only yesterday a very expensively-dressed lady came along, and I heard her say to the fellow who was with her, 'This is the monkey who likes to look at himself in a mirror.'

"'*Her*self,' corrected her companion, being a bit of a wag.

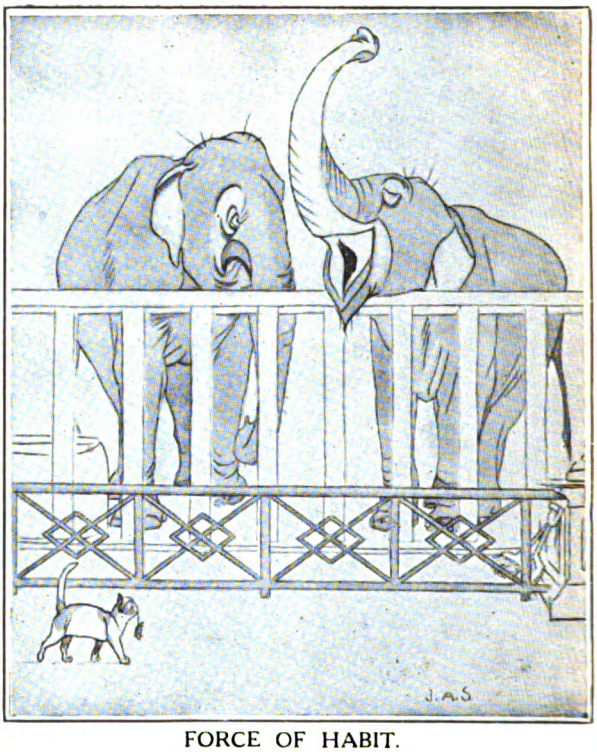
"'Keeper,' said the lady, 'isn't this monkey a male?'

"I had to admit that he was.

"Then the lady tore the mirror out of the lining of her handbag—most destructive, I call it—and gave it to the monkey. Now in the ordinary way that monkey is vanity itself, and he will often spend hours gazing at his own reflection in a bit of glass. But this time he must have overheard the conversation, for what do you think he did? He took the mirror and deliberately smashed it to pieces against the wall!"

Seeking further anecdotes to serve as a suitable supplement to the accompanying collection of pictorial jokes, I encouraged the keeper to tell me more.

"Some years ago," he continued, "there was a monkey here who had a positive passion for silk handkerchiefs. She would beg them, or steal them, from visitors whenever she could. Then she'd take them



FORCE OF HABIT.
The Elephant asks for it.
By permission of "The Sketch."

"Oh, Mamma! how can that animal afford a coat like yours?"
By permission of "London Opinion."

into her cage, dip them in water, rub them between her paws as if washing them, wring them out, and then finally hang them up to dry!

"I remember hearing one little girl ask her father whether the monkeys really used the handkerchiefs, and when her father replied that they probably did, she followed up with another question: 'Who tells the monkeys when their noses want blowing—the keeper or God?'

"The funny remarks people make! Do you know it's an absolute fact that when these long-tailed monkeys suspend themselves from tree branches by their tails some people get quite concerned about it? Not once but thirty times at least have I been sent for by some anxious old lady, only to be told that 'one of the poor monkeys has got caught up by his tail and can't get down again!'

"Talking about tails, we once had a beautiful little squirrel here who used to pick her tail up in her mouth, carry it carefully to her box high up in the cage, and gently deposit it on the floor. As soon as she had done this she would leap down to ground level again, where she would discover, with apparent surprise, that the tail was still with her. Thereupon she would repeat the careful carrying process over and over again.

"This little squirrel continued to attract large crowds until, by a strange trick of fate, she was ousted from popularity by another animal. Perhaps you remember the ridiculous game of 'Beaver'? Well, whilst that lasted the little animal that bears that name was the centre of attraction. People would crowd round the cage all day long making silly remarks and roaring with laughter. I expect the beaver wondered what the joke was about. Anyhow, the poor little squirrel was so upset at the realization that her neighbour had stolen the

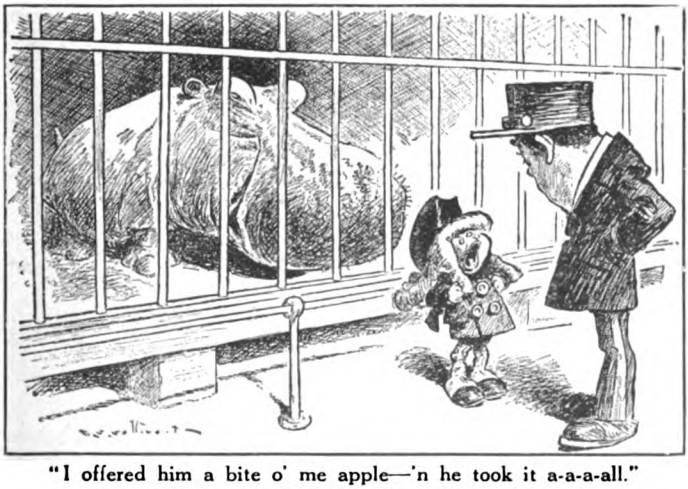
"Oh! look, Daddy—the elephant's got legs just like you."

By permission of "London Opinion."

THE NEW COUNTRY ZOO.

"It's all very well for you and me to bury ourselves in the country, but what about Ethel? It will utterly ruin her prospects."

By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."



"I offered him a bite o' me apple—'n he took it a-a-a-all."

By permission of "London Opinion."

limelight from her that she abandoned the tail trick for good."

Another keeper took me behind the scenes and introduced me to Murphy, whom he described as the best-tempered and most intelligent orang-outang in captivity. Murphy emerged from his cage with a whimper of joy, flung his arms round the keeper's neck, and then performed three somersaults along the ground as a further expression of his elation.

Little Girl: "Oh, Mummy, isn't he clever? He thinks he's in the Tube."

By permission of "The Humorist."

"Murphy is a born showman," said his keeper. "He is never happier than when he has a crowd of people round his cage, and the more laughter he can create the more he likes it. He understands every word I say to him, and I believe he knows what some of the visitors say, too.

"Only the other day I heard a youngster remark in a loud voice, 'Isn't that big monkey like Uncle Fred?'

"'Hush! He'll hear you,' said his mother, sharply.

"Do you know, for the moment I really thought she was afraid of offending Murphy—until I realized that Uncle Fred himself was standing just behind the party!"

"Can I take him for a walk, please, Mister, if I promise to bring him back?"

By permission of "London Opinion."

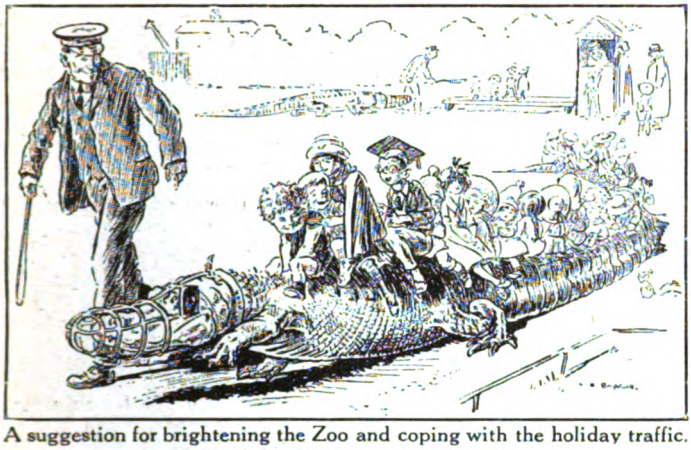
The keeper of the hippopotami, who is known to most visitors as "Smiler," on account of his cheerful disposition, is a born humorist. He shook with laughter when I showed him the accompanying picture of the small child complaining to the keeper that he offered the hippo a bit of his apple and the beast took it all.

"That may be a bit far-fetched, as many jokes are," said "Smiler," "but it is pretty nearly true to life. Only the other day a youngster said to me, quite seriously: 'Will it hurt your hippopotamus if I give him a piece of my chocolate?'

"I was so amused that I replied, 'Well, sonny, we'll just see if he's got room for it.'

Unappreciated humorous artist finds consolation at the Zoo.

By permission of "The Humorist."



A suggestion for brightening the Zoo and coping with the holiday traffic.
By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

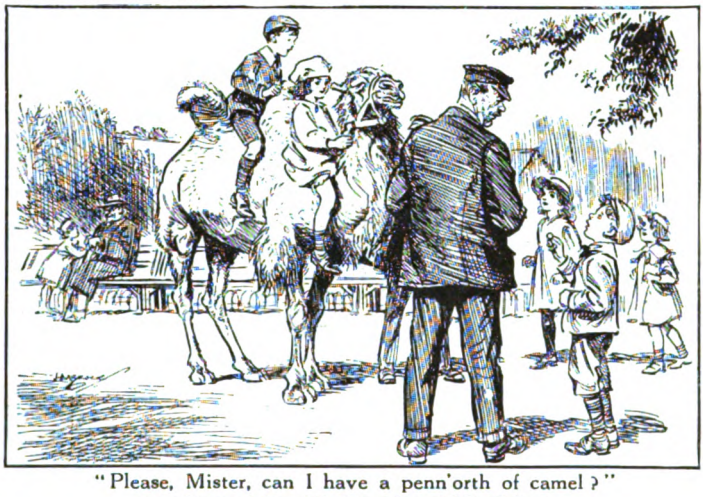
Then I called the hippo along—he weighs four tons—and told him to open his mouth. When the child saw the big jaws gaping nearly five feet apart he was awe-stricken. But after a moment he turned to his nurse and said, 'Oh, I say! Wasn't that a *rude yawn?*'"

I reminded this keeper of the classic anecdote of the bucolic visitor who, upon seeing a giraffe for the first time in his life, stared at it for a while and then declared, "I don't believe it!"

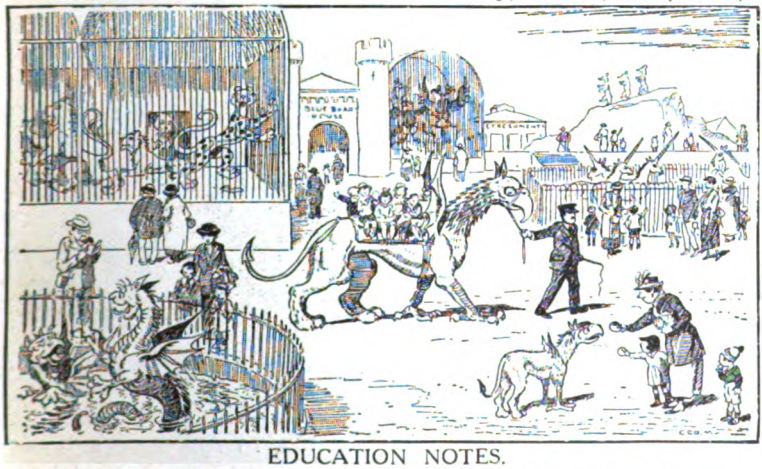
He responded with a story of a visitor of doubtful integrity who, observing the long neck and downcast eyes of the giraffe, remarked to his companion, "Lumme! Wouldn't he make a fine partner at a whist drive?"

Then he told me another one concerning two small boys who came upon a giraffe reclining upon the ground.

"I wish it would get up," said one.



"Please, Mister, can I have a penn'orth of camel?"
By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."



EDUCATION NOTES.

It is rumoured that the Royal College of Heralds contemplates the establishment and endowment of Zoological Gardens to be entirely devoted to heraldic animals.

By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

"Well," replied the other, "it would have an awful lot of 'up' to get."

In conclusion, there is one fact I must set on record concerning "Smiler."

Through his long association with and his real affection for the beasts under his charge he has come to believe, quite sincerely, that the hippo is a beautiful creature.

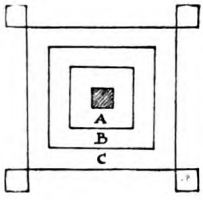
There ought to be a moral in this somewhere!

PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

861.—BLOCKS AND SQUARES.

HERE is a curious but not easy puzzle that appeared, I believe, some ten years ago, though I have not been able to trace its author.



Three children each possessed a box containing cubic blocks, the same number of blocks in every box. The first girl was able, using all her blocks, to make a hollow square, as indicated by A. The second girl made a larger square, as B. The third girl made a still larger square, as C, but had four blocks left over for the corners as shown. Each girl used all her blocks at each stage. What is the smallest number of blocks that each box could have contained?

862.—SHARING THE APPLES.

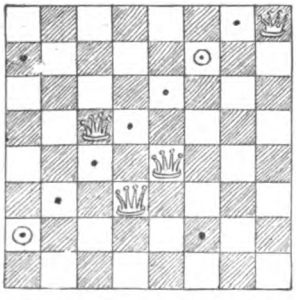
EIGHT children divided thirty-two apples as follows: Anne got 1, Mary 2, Jane 3, and Kate 4. Ned Smith took as many as his sister, Tom Brown twice as many as his sister, Bill Jones three times as many as his sister, and Jack Robinson four times as many as his sister. Can you give the full names of the girls?

863.—A CHARADE.

My *first* is a female,
My *second's* the same,
My *whole* is much dreaded;
Pray what is its name?

864.—THE GUARDED CHESSBOARD.

HERE is a position that I gave in an article, "Puzzles from Games," in this magazine for March–April, 1908. The five queens have so to be placed on the board that every square is either occupied or attacked. Four queens are here placed, and it will be found that the



fifth queen can be placed on any one of the nine squares marked with a dot to give a correct solution, as the two squares with encircled dots are all that remain to be dealt with. The puzzle I now propose is so to place four of the queens that the fifth may be put on any one of as many as twelve different squares, leaving every square of the board either occupied or attacked after it is placed.

865.—THE THREE DROVERS.

THREE drovers met on the highway. Said Jack to Jim: "If I give you six pigs for a horse, then you'll have twice as many animals in your drove as I will have in mine." Said Dan to Jack: "If I give you fourteen sheep for a horse, then you'll have three times as many animals as I have got." Said Jim to Dan: "But if I give you four cows for a horse, then you'll have six times as many animals as I."

There were no deals, but from this interesting conversation can you tell just how many animals there were in the three droves?

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

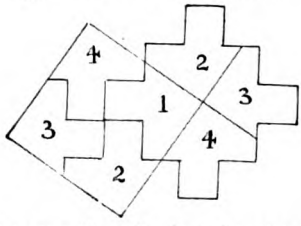
856.—LUCK IN ADJUDICATIONS.

(1) Q — Kt 6 (ch), (1) K — R sq; (2) Kt — Kt 5, (2) R P x Kt; (3) Q — R 5 mate. If (2) B P x Kt; (3) Q x R P mate. If (2) Q x P; (3) Kt — B 7 mate. If (2) anything else; (3) Q — R 7 mate.

857.—ACCOMMODATING SQUARES.

THE number is 225625 (the squares of 15 and 25), making the square of 475.

858.—MAKING A SQUARE.



THE diagram will make it quite clear how the figure should be cut into four pieces of the same size and shape that will form a perfect square.

859.—THE OMNIBUS RIDE.

THEY can ride three times as fast as they can walk, therefore three-quarters of their time must have been spent in walking and only a quarter in riding. Therefore they rode for two hours, going eighteen miles, and walked back in six hours, thus exactly filling their eight hours.

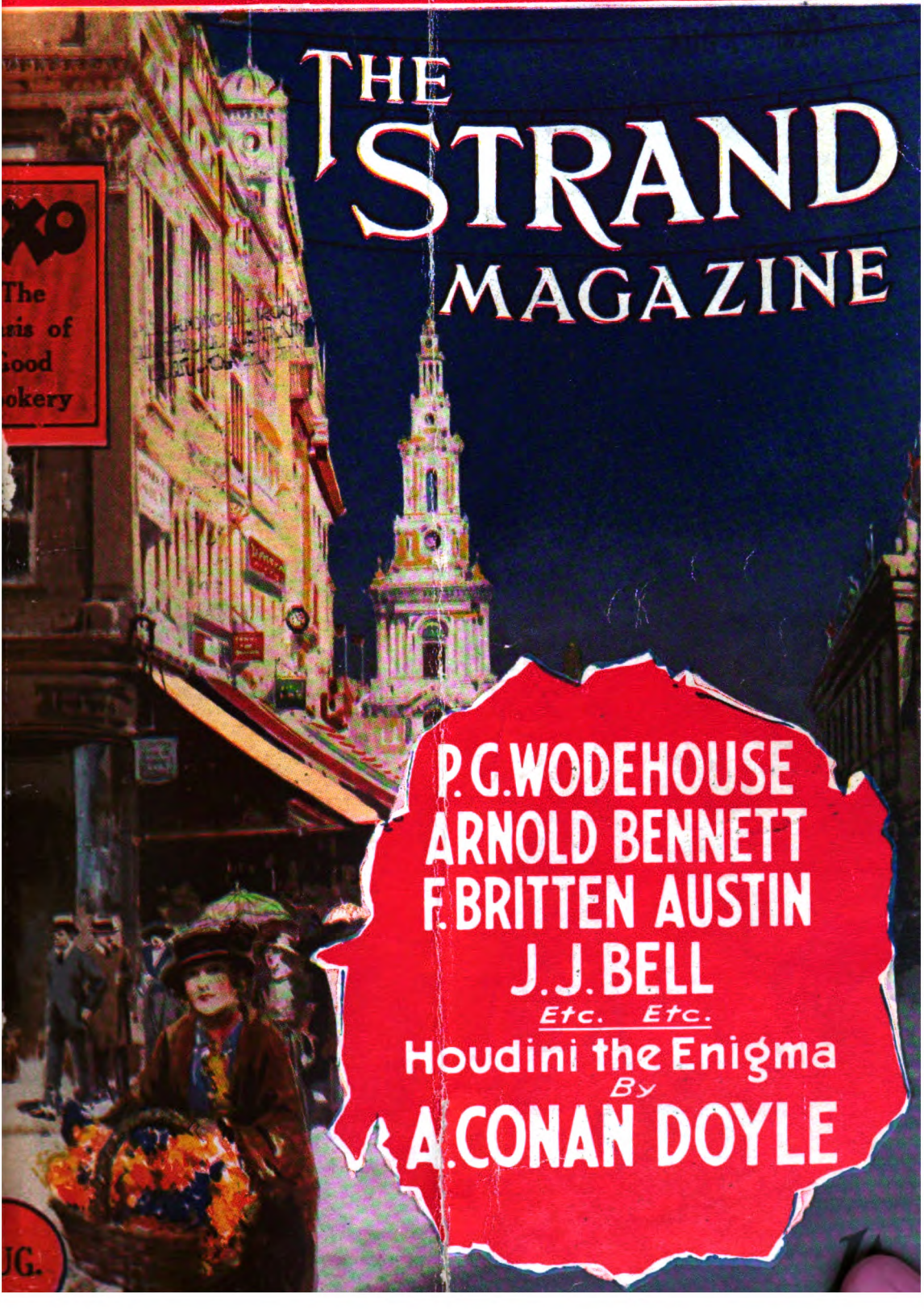
860.—A SEQUEL TO THE ICEMAN.

THE following are the words in their proper order: APPRENTICE, COCKATRICE, BEATRICE, ALICE, HOSPICE, NOVICE, VOICE, NICE, REJOICE, TRICE, ENTICE, ARMISTICE, SLICE.

OLIDAY FICTION NUMBER

AUG 4 1927

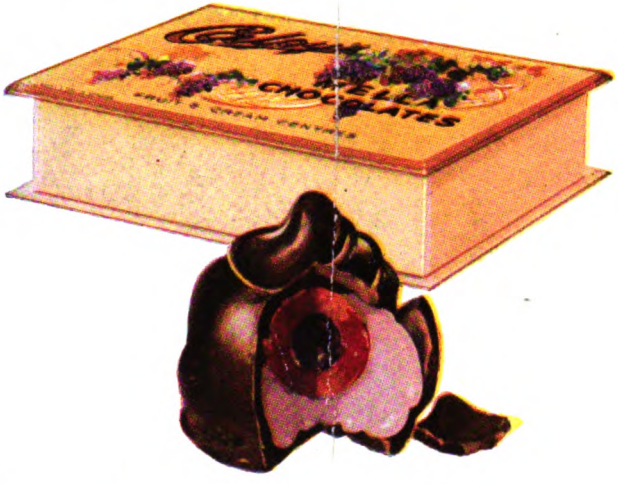
THE STRAND MAGAZINE



P. G. WODEHOUSE
ARNOLD BENNETT
F. BRITTEN AUSTIN
J. J. BELL
Etc. Etc.

Houdini the Enigma
By
A. CONAN DOYLE

You must try these new chocolates



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THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for August, 1927.

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Frontispiece: "Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!" yodelled Lord Emsworth, in a high, penetrating tenor voice which caused ninety-three Senior Conservative members to congeal into living statues of alarm and disapproval.

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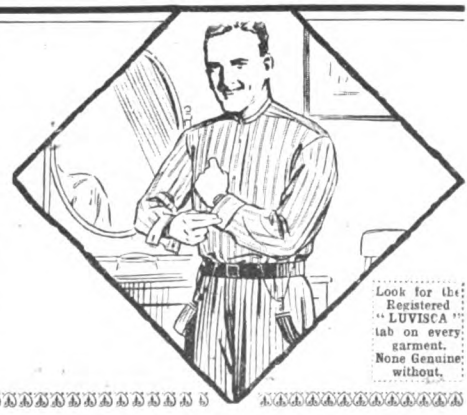

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That's *why more and more people change to Army Club!*

To face back of Frontispiece.

AUGUST, 1927.

"PIG-HOO-O-O-O-EY!" YODELLED LORD EMSWORTH, IN A HIGH, PENETRATING TENOR VOICE WHICH CAUSED NINETY-THREE SENIOR CONSERVATIVES TO CONGEAL INTO LIVING STATUES OF ALARM AND DISAPPROVAL.

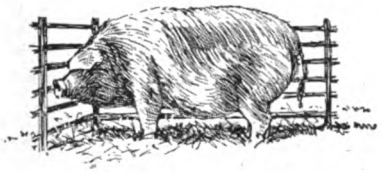
(See page 115.)

"Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!"

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

Illustrated by
REGINALD CLEAVER



THANKS to the publicity given to the matter by *The Bridgnorth, Shifnal, and Albrighton Argus* (with which is incorporated *The Wheat-Growers' Intelligencer and Stock Breeders' Gazetteer*), the whole world to-day knows that the silver medal in the Fat Pigs class at the eighty-seventh annual Shropshire Agricultural Show was won by the Earl of Emsworth's black Berkshire sow, Empress of Blandings.

Very few people, however, are aware how near that splendid animal came to missing the coveted honour.

Now it can be told.

THIS brief chapter of Secret History may be said to have begun on the night of the eighteenth of July, when George Cyril Wellbeloved (twenty-nine), pig-man in the employ of Lord Emsworth, was arrested by Police-Constable Evans of Market Blandings for being drunk and disorderly in the tap-room of the Goat and Feathers. On July the nineteenth, after first offering to apologize, then explaining that it had been his birthday, and finally attempting to prove an alibi, George Cyril was very properly jugged for fourteen days without the option of a fine.

On July the twentieth, Empress of Blandings, always hitherto a hearty and even a boisterous feeder, for the first time on record declined all nourishment. And on the morning of July the twenty-first, the veterinary surgeon, called in to diagnose and deal with this strange asceticism, was compelled to confess to Lord Emsworth that the thing was beyond his professional skill.

Let us just see, before proceeding, that we have got these dates right :—

July 18.—Birthday Orgy of Cyril Wellbeloved.

July 19.—Incarceration of Ditto.

July 20.—Pig Lays off the Vitamines.

July 21.—Veterinary Surgeon Baffled.

Right.

The effect of the veterinary surgeon's announcement on Lord Emsworth was overwhelming. As a rule, the wear and tear of our complex modern life left this vague and amiable peer unscathed. So long as he had sunshine, regular meals, and complete freedom from the society of his younger son Frederick, he was placidly happy. But there were chinks in his armour, and one of these had been pierced this morning. Dazed by the news he had received, he stood at the window of the great library of Blandings Castle, looking out with unseeing eyes.

As he stood there, the door opened. Lord Emsworth turned; and having blinked once or twice, as was his habit when confronted suddenly with anything, recognized in the handsome and imperious-looking woman who had entered his sister, Lady Constance Keeble. Her demeanour, like his own, betrayed the deepest agitation.

"Clarence," she cried, "an awful thing has happened!"

Lord Emsworth nodded dully.

"I know. He's just told me."

"What! Has he been here?"

"Only this moment left."

"Why did you let him go? You must have known I would want to see him."

"What good would that have done?"

"I could at least have assured him of my sympathy," said Lady Constance, stiffly.

"Yes, I suppose you could," said Lord Emsworth, having considered the point.

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"Not that he deserves any sympathy. The man's an ass."

"Nothing of the kind. A most intelligent young man, as young men go."

"Young? Would you call him young? Fifty, I should have said, if a day."

"Are you out of your senses? Heacham fifty?"

"Not Heacham. Smithers."

As frequently happened to her when in conversation with her brother, Lady Constance experienced a swimming sensation in the head.

"Will you kindly tell me, Clarence, in a few simple words, what you imagine we are talking about?"

"I'm talking about Smithers. Empress of Blandings is refusing her food, and Smithers says he can't do anything about it. And he calls himself a vet!"

"Then you haven't heard? Clarence, a dreadful thing has happened. Angela has broken off her engagement to Heacham."

"And the Agricultural Show on Wednesday week!"

"What on earth has that got to do with it?" demanded Lady Constance, feeling a recurrence of the swimming sensation.

"What has it got to do with it?" said Lord Emsworth, warmly. "My champion sow, with less than ten days to prepare herself for a most searching examination in competition with all the finest pigs in the county, starts refusing her food——"

"Will you stop maundering on about your insufferable pig and give your attention to something that really matters? I tell you that Angela—your niece Angela—has broken off her engagement to Lord Heacham and expresses her intention of marrying that hopeless ne'er-do-well, James Belford."

"The son of old Belford, the parson?"

"Yes."

"She can't. He's in America."

"He is not in America. He is in London."

"No," said Lord Emsworth, shaking his head sagely. "You're wrong. I remember meeting his father two years ago out on the road by Meeker's twenty-acre field, and he distinctly told me the boy was sailing for America next day. He must be there by this time."

"Can't you understand? He's come back."

"Oh? Come back? I see. Come *back?*"

"You know there was once a silly sentimental sort of affair between him and Angela; but a year after he left she became engaged to Heacham and I thought the whole thing was over and done with. And now it seems that she met this young man Belford when she was in London last week, and it has started all over again. She tells me she has written to Heacham and broken the engagement."

THERE was a silence. Brother and sister remained for a space plunged in thought. Lord Emsworth was the first to speak.

"We've tried acorns," he said. "We've tried skim milk. And we've tried potato-peel. But, no, she won't touch them."

Conscious of two eyes raising blisters on his sensitive skin, he came to himself with a start.

"Absurd! Ridiculous! Preposterous!" he said, hurriedly. "Breaking the engagement? Pooh! Tush! What nonsense! I'll have a word with that young man. If he thinks he can go about the place playing fast and loose with my niece and jilting her without so much as a——"

"Clarence!"

Lord Emsworth blinked. Something appeared to be wrong, but he could not imagine what. It seemed to him that in his last speech he had struck just the right note—strong, forceful, dignified.

"Eh?"

"It is Angela who has broken the engagement."

"Oh, Angela?"

"She is infatuated with this man Belford. And the point is, what are we to do about it?"

Lord Emsworth reflected.

"Take a strong line," he said, firmly. "Stand no nonsense. Don't send 'em a wedding-present."

There is no doubt that, given time, Lady Constance would have found and uttered some adequately corrosive comment on this imbecile suggestion; but even as she was swelling preparatory to giving tongue, the door opened and a girl came in.

She was a pretty girl, with fair hair and blue eyes which in their softer moments probably reminded all sorts of people of twin lagoons slumbering beneath a southern sky. This, however, was not one of those moments. To Lord Emsworth, as they met his, they looked like something out of an oxy-acetylene blowpipe; and, as far as he was capable of being disturbed by anything that was not his younger son Frederick, he was disturbed. Angela, it seemed to him, was upset about something; and he was sorry. He liked Angela.

To ease a tense situation, he said:—

"Angela, my dear, do you know anything about pigs?"

The girl laughed. One of those sharp, bitter laughs which are so unpleasant just after breakfast.

"Yes, I do. You're one."

"Me?"

"Angela, my dear, do you know anything about pigs?" asked Lord Emsworth.
The girl laughed.
"Yes, I do. You're one."

"Yes, you. Aunt Constance says that, if I marry Jimmy, you won't let me have my money."

"Money? Money?" Lord Emsworth was mildly puzzled. "What money? You never lent me any money?"

Lady Constance's feelings found vent in a sound like an overheated radiator.

"I believe this absent-mindedness of yours is nothing but a ridiculous pose, Clarence. You know perfectly well that when poor Julia died she left you Angela's trustee."

"And I can't touch my money without your consent till I'm twenty-five."

"Well, how old are you?"

"Twenty-one."

"Then what are you worrying about?" asked Lord Emsworth, surprised. "No need to worry about it for another four years. God bless my soul, the money is quite safe. It is in excellent securities."

Angela stamped her foot. An unladylike action, no doubt, but how much better than kicking an uncle with it, as her lower nature prompted.

"I have told Angela," explained Lady Constance, "that, while we naturally cannot force her to marry Lord Heacham, we can at least keep her money from being

squandered by this wastrel on whom she proposes to throw herself away."

"He isn't a wastrel. He's got quite enough money to marry me on, but he wants some capital to buy a partnership in a——"

"He is a wastrel. Wasn't he sent abroad because——"

"That was two years ago. And since then——"

"My dear Angela, you may argue until——"

"I'm not arguing. I'm simply saying that I'm going to marry Jimmy, if we both have to starve in the gutter."

"What gutter?" asked his lordship, wrenching his errant mind away from thoughts of acorns.

"Any gutter."

"Now, please listen to me, Angela."

It seemed to Lord Emsworth that there was a frightful amount of conversation going on. He had the sensation of having become a mere bit of flotsam upon a tossing sea of female voices. Both his sister and his niece appeared to have much to say, and they were saying it simultaneously and fortissimo. He looked wistfully at the door.

It was smoothly done. A twist of the handle, and he was where beyond those voices there was peace. Galloping gaily down the stairs, he charged out into the sunshine.

HIS gaiety was not long-lived. Free at last to concentrate itself on the really serious issues of life, his mind grew sombre and grim. Once more there descended upon him the cloud which had been oppressing his soul before all this Heacham-Angela-Belford business began. Each step that took him nearer to the sty where the ailing Empress resided seemed a heavier step than the last. He reached the sty; and, draping himself over the rails, peered moodily at the vast expanse of pig within.

For, even though she had been doing a bit of dieting of late, Empress of Blandings was far from being an ill-nourished animal. She resembled a captive balloon with ears and a tail, and was as nearly circular as a pig can be without bursting. Nevertheless, Lord Emsworth, as he regarded her, mourned and would not be comforted. A few more square meals under her belt, and no pig in all Shropshire could have held its head up in the Empress's presence. And now, just for lack of those few meals, the supreme animal would probably be relegated to the mean obscurity of an "Honourably Mentioned." It was bitter, bitter.

He became aware that somebody was speaking to him; and, turning, perceived a solemn young man in riding breeches.

"I say," said the young man.

Lord Emsworth, though he would have preferred solitude, was relieved to find that the intruder was at least one of his own sex. Women are apt to stray off into side-issues, but men are practical and can be relied on to stick to the fundamentals. Besides, young Heacham probably kept pigs himself and might have a useful hint or two up his sleeve.

"I say, I've just ridden over to see if there was anything I could do about this fearful business."

"Uncommonly kind and thoughtful of you, my dear fellow," said Lord Emsworth, touched. "I fear things look very black."

"It's an absolute mystery to me."

"To me, too."

"I mean to say, she was all right last week."

"She was all right as late as the day before yesterday."

"Seemed quite cheery and chirpy and all that."

"Entirely so."

"And then this happens—out of a blue sky, as you might say."

"Exactly. It is insoluble. We have done everything possible to tempt her appetite."

"Her appetite? Is Angela ill?"

"Angela? No, I fancy not. She seemed perfectly well a few minutes ago."

"You've seen her this morning, then? Did she say anything about this fearful business?"

"No. She was speaking about some money."

"It's all so dashed unexpected."

"Like a bolt from the blue," agreed Lord Emsworth. "Such a thing has never happened before. I fear the worst. According to the Wolff-Lehmann feeding standards, a pig, if in health, should consume daily nourishment amounting to fifty-seven thousand eight hundred calories, these to consist of proteids four pounds five ounces, carbohydrates twenty-five pounds——"

"What has that got to do with Angela?"

"Angela?"

"I came to find out why Angela has broken off our engagement."

Lord Emsworth marshalled his thoughts. He had a misty idea that he had heard something mentioned about that. It came back to him.

"Ah, yes, of course. She has broken off the engagement, hasn't she? I believe it is because she is in love with someone else. Yes, now that I recollect, that was distinctly stated. The whole thing comes back to me quite clearly. Angela has decided to marry someone else. I knew there was some satisfactory explanation. Tell me, my dear

fellow, what are your views on linseed meal."

"What do you mean, linseed meal?"

"Why, linseed meal," said Lord Emsworth, not being able to find a better definition. "As a food for pigs."

"Oh, curse all pigs!"

"What!" There was a sort of astounded horror in Lord Emsworth's voice. He had never been particularly fond of young Heacham, for he was not a man who took much to his juniors, but he had not supposed him capable of anarchistic sentiments like this. "What did you say?"

"I said, 'Curse all pigs!' You keep talking about pigs. I'm not interested in pigs. I don't want to discuss pigs. Blast and damn every pig in existence!"

Lord Emsworth watched him, as he strode away, with an emotion that was partly indignation and partly relief—indignation that a landowner and a fellow son of Shropshire could have brought himself to utter such words, and relief that one capable of such utterance was not going to marry into his family. He had always in his woollen-headed way been very fond of his niece Angela, and it was nice to think that the child had such solid good sense and so much cool discernment. Many girls of her age would have been carried away by the glamour of young Heacham's position and wealth; but she, divining with an intuition beyond her years that he was unsound on the subject of pigs, had drawn back while there was still time and refused to marry him.

A pleasant glow suffused Lord Emsworth's bosom, to be frozen out a few moments later as he perceived his sister Constance bearing down upon him. Lady Constance was a beautiful woman, but there were times when the charm of her face was marred by a rather curious expression; and from nursery days onward his lordship had learned that this expression meant trouble. She was wearing it now.

"Tell me, my dear fellow, what are your views on linseed meal as a food for pigs."

"Clarence," she said, "I have had enough of this nonsense of Angela and young Belford. The thing cannot be allowed to go drifting on. You must catch the two o'clock train to London."

"What! Why?"

"You must see this man Belford and tell him that, if Angela insists on marrying him, she will not have a penny for four years. I shall be greatly surprised if that piece of information does not put an end to the whole business."

Lord Emsworth scratched meditatively at the Empress's tank-like back. A mutinous expression was on his mild face.

"Don't see why she shouldn't marry the fellow," he mumbled.

"Marry James Belford?"

"I don't see why not. Seems fond of him and all that."

"You never have had a grain of sense in your head, Clarence. Angela is going to marry Heacham."

'Can't stand that man. All wrong about pigs."

"Clarence, I don't wish to have any more discussion and argument. You will go to London on the two o'clock train. You will see Mr. Belford. And you will tell him about Angela's money. Is that quite clear?"

"Oh, all right," said his lordship, moodily. "All right, all right, all right."

THE emotions of the Earl of Emsworth, as he sat next day facing his luncheon-guest, James Bartholomew Belford, across a table in the main dining-room of the Senior Conservative Club, were not of the liveliest and most agreeable. It was bad enough to be in London at all on such a day of golden sunshine. To be charged, while there, with the task of blighting the romance of two young people for whom he entertained a warm regard was unpleasant to a degree

For, now that he had given the matter thought, Lord Emsworth recalled that he had always liked this boy Belford. A pleasant lad, with, he remembered now, a healthy fondness for that rural existence which so appealed to himself. By no means the sort of fellow who, in the very presence and hearing of Empress of Blandings, would have spoken disparagingly and with oaths of pigs as a class. It occurred to Lord Emsworth, as it has occurred to so many people, that the distribution of money in this world is all wrong. Why should a man like pig-despising Heacham have a rent roll that ran into the tens of thousands, while this very deserving youngster had nothing?

These thoughts not only saddened Lord Emsworth—they embarrassed him. He hated unpleasantness, and it was suddenly borne in upon him that, after he had broken the news that Angela's bit of capital was locked up and not likely to get loose, conversation with his young friend during the remainder of lunch was likely to be somewhat difficult.

He made up his mind to postpone the revelation. During the meal, he decided, he would chat pleasantly of this and that; and then, later, while bidding his guest good-bye, he would spring the thing on him and dive back into the recesses of the club.

Considerably cheered at having solved a delicate problem with such adroitness, he started to prattle.

"The gardens at Blandings," he said, "are looking particularly attractive this summer. My head-gardener, Angus McAllister, is a man with whom I do not always find myself seeing eye to eye, notably in the matter of hollyhocks, on which I consider his views subversive to a degree; but there is no denying that he understands roses. The rose garden——"

"How well I remember that rose garden," said James Belford, sighing slightly and helping himself to brussels sprouts. "It was there that Angela and I used to meet on summer mornings."

LORD EMSWORTH blinked. This was not an encouraging start, but the Emsworths were a fighting clan. He had another try.

"I have seldom seen such a blaze of colour as was to be witnessed there during the month of June. Both McAllister and I adopted a very strong policy with the slugs and plant lice, with the result that the place was a mass of flourishing Damasks and Ayrshires and——"

"Properly to appreciate roses," said James Belford, "you want to see them as a setting for a girl like Angela. With her fair hair gleaming against the green leaves she makes a rose garden seem a veritable Paradise."

"No doubt," said Lord Emsworth. "No doubt. I am glad you liked my rose garden. At Blandings, of course, we have the natural advantage of loamy soil, rich in plant food and humus; but, as I often say to McAllister, and on this point we have never had the slightest disagreement, loamy soil by itself is not enough. You must have manure. If every autumn a liberal mulch of stable manure is spread upon the beds and the coarser parts removed in the spring before the annual forking——"

"Angela tells me," said James Belford, "that you have forbidden our marriage."

Lord Emsworth choked dismally over his chicken. Directness of this kind, he told himself with a pang of self-pity, was the sort of thing young Englishmen picked up in America. Diplomatic circumlocution flourished only in a more leisurely civilization, and in those energetic and forceful surroundings you learned to Talk Quick and Do It Now, and all sorts of uncomfortable things.

"Er—well, yes, now you mention it, I believe some informal decision of that nature was arrived at. You see, my dear fellow, my sister Constance feels rather strongly——"

"I understand. I suppose she thinks I'm a sort of prodigal."

"No, no, my dear fellow. She never said that. Wastrel was the term she employed."

"Well, perhaps I did start out in business on those lines. But you can take it from me that when you find yourself employed on a farm in Nebraska belonging to an applejack-nourished patriarch with strong views on work and a good vocabulary, you soon develop a certain liveliness."

"Are you employed on a farm?"

"I was employed on a farm."

"Pigs?" said Lord Emsworth in a low, eager voice.

"Among other things."

Lord Emsworth gulped. His fingers clutched at the tablecloth.

"Then perhaps, my dear fellow, you can give me some advice. For the last two days my prize sow, Empress of Blandings, has declined all nourishment. And the Agricultural Show is on Wednesday week. I am distracted with anxiety."

James Belford frowned thoughtfully.

"What does your pig-man say about it?"

"My pig-man was sent to prison two days ago. Two days!" For the first time the significance of the coincidence struck him. "You don't think that can have anything to do with the animal's loss of appetite?"

"Certainly. I imagine she is missing him and pining away because he isn't there."

Lord Emsworth was surprised. He had only a distant acquaintance with George Cyril Wellbeloved; but from what he had seen of him he had not credited him with this fatal fascination.

"She probably misses his evening call."

Again his lordship found himself perplexed. He had had no notion that pigs were such sticklers for the formalities of social life.

"His call?"

"He must have given some special call when he wanted her to come to dinner. One of the first things you learn on a farm is hog-calling. Pigs are temperamental. Call them wrong, and they'll starve before they'll put on the nose-bag. Call them right, and they'll follow you to the ends of the earth with their mouths watering. I knew a man out in Nebraska who used to call his pigs by tapping on the edge of the trough with his wooden leg."

"Did he, indeed?"

"But a most unfortunate thing happened. One evening, hearing a woodpecker at the top of a tree, they started shinning up it; and when the man came out he found them all lying there in a circle with their necks broken."

"This is no time for joking," said Lord Emsworth, pained.

"I'm not joking Solid fact. Ask anybody out there. But if you want information about hog-calling, you've come to the right man. I studied under Fred Patzel, the champion. What a master! I've known pork chops to leap from their plates when that man called 'Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!'"

"Pig——?"

"——hoo-o-o-o-ey."

"Pig-hoo-o-o-ey?"

"You haven't got it quite right. The first syllable should be short and staccato, the second long and rising into a falsetto, high but true."

"Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey."

"Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey."

"Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!" yodelled Lord Emsworth, flinging his head back and letting it go in a high, penetrating tenor voice which caused ninety-three Senior Conservatives, lunching in the vicinity, to congeal into living statues of alarm and disapproval.

"More body to the 'hoo,'" advised James Belford.

"Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!"

The Senior Conservative club is one of the few places in London where lunchers are not accustomed to getting music with their meals. White-whiskered financiers gazed bleakly at bald-headed politicians, asking silently what was to be done about this. Bald-headed politicians stared back at white-whiskered financiers, replying in the language of the eye that they did not know. The general sentiment prevailing was a vague determination to write to the Committee about it.

"Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!" carolled Lord Emsworth. And, as he did so, his eye fell on the clock over the mantelpiece. Its hands pointed to twenty minutes to two.

He started convulsively. The best train in the day for Market Blandings was the one which left Paddington station at two sharp. After that there was nothing till the five-five.

He was not a man who often thought; but, when he did, to think was with him to act. A moment later he was scudding over the carpet, making for the door that led to the broad staircase.

THROUGHOUT the room which he had left, the decision to write in strong terms to the Committee was now universal; but from the mind, such as it was, of Lord Emsworth the past, with the single exception of the word "Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!" had been completely blotted.

Whispering the magic syllables, he sped to the cloak-room and retrieved his hat. Murmuring them over and over again, he sprang into a cab. He was still repeating them as the train moved out of the station; and he would doubtless have gone on repeating them all the way to Market Blandings, had he not, as was his invariable practice when travelling by rail, fallen asleep after the first ten minutes of the journey.

The stopping of the train at Swindon Junction woke him with a start. He sat up, wondering, after his usual fashion on these occasions, who and where he was. Memory returned to him, but a memory that was, alas, incomplete. He remembered his name. He remembered that he was on his way home from a visit to London. But what it was that you said to a pig when inviting it to drop in for a bite of dinner he had completely forgotten.

IT was the opinion of Lady Constance Keeble, expressed verbally during dinner in the brief intervals when they were alone, and by means of silent telepathy when Beach, the butler, was adding his dignified presence to the proceedings, that her brother Clarence, in his expedition to London to put matters plainly to James Belford, had made an outstanding idiot of himself.

There had been no need whatever to invite the man Belford to lunch; but, having invited him to lunch, to leave him

sitting, without having clearly stated that Angela would have no money for four years, was the act of a congenital imbecile. Lady Constance had been aware ever since their childhood days that her brother had about as much sense as a——

Here Beach entered, superintending the bringing-in of the savoury, and she had been obliged to suspend her remarks.

This sort of conversation is never agreeable to a sensitive man, and his lordship had removed himself from the danger zone as soon as he could manage it. He was now seated in the library, sipping port and straining a brain which Nature had never intended for hard exercise in an effort to bring back that word of magic of which his unfortunate habit of sleeping in trains had robbed him.

" Pig——"

He could remember as far as that ; but of what avail was a single syllable ? Besides, weak as his memory was, he could recall that the whole gist or nub of the thing lay in the syllable that followed. The " pig " was a mere preliminary.

Lord Emsworth finished his port and got up. He felt restless, stifled. The summer night seemed to call to him like some silver-voiced swineherd calling to his pig. Possibly, he thought, a breath of fresh air might stimulate his brain-cells. He wandered downstairs ; and, having dug a shocking old slouch hat out of the cupboard where he hid it to keep his sister Constance from impounding and burning it, he strode heavily out into the garden.

HE was pottering aimlessly to and fro in the parts adjacent to the rear of the castle when there appeared in his path a slender female form. He recognized it without pleasure. Any unbiased judge would have said that his niece Angela, standing there in the soft, pale light, looked like some dainty spirit of the Moon. Lord Emsworth was not an unbiased judge. To him Angela merely looked like Trouble. The march of civilization has given the modern girl a vocabulary and an ability to use it which her grandmother never had. Lord Emsworth would not have minded meeting Angela's grandmother a bit.

" Is that you, my dear ? " he said, nervously.

" Yes."

" I didn't see you at dinner."

" I didn't want any dinner. The food would have choked me. I can't eat."

" It's precisely the same with my pig," said his lordship. " Young Belford tells me——"

Into Angela's queenly disdain there flashed a sudden animation.

" Have you seen Jimmy ? What did he say ? "

" That's just what I can't remember. It began with the word ' Pig '——"

" But after he had finished talking about you, I mean. Didn't he say anything about coming down here ? "

" Not that I remember."

" I expect you weren't listening. You've got a very annoying habit, Uncle Clarence," said Angela, maternally, " of switching your mind off and just going blah when people are talking to you. It gets you very much disliked on all sides. Didn't Jimmy say anything about me ? "

" I fancy so. Yes, I am nearly sure he did."

" Well, what ? "

" I cannot remember."

There was a sharp clicking noise in the darkness. It was caused by Angela's top front teeth meeting her bottom front teeth ; and was followed by a sort of wordless exclamation. It seemed only too plain that the love and respect which a niece should have for an uncle were in the present instance at a very low ebb.

" I wish you wouldn't do that," said Lord Emsworth, plaintively.

" Do what ? "

" Make clicking noises at me."

" I will make clicking noises at you. You know perfectly well, Uncle Clarence, that you are behaving like a bohunkus."

" A what ? "

" A bohunkus," explained his niece, coldly, " is a very inferior sort of worm. Not the kind of worm that you see on lawns, which you can respect, but a really degraded species."

" I wish you would go in, my dear," said Lord Emsworth. " The night air may give you a chill."

" I won't go in. I came out here to look at the moon and think of Jimmy. What are you doing out here, if it comes to that ? "

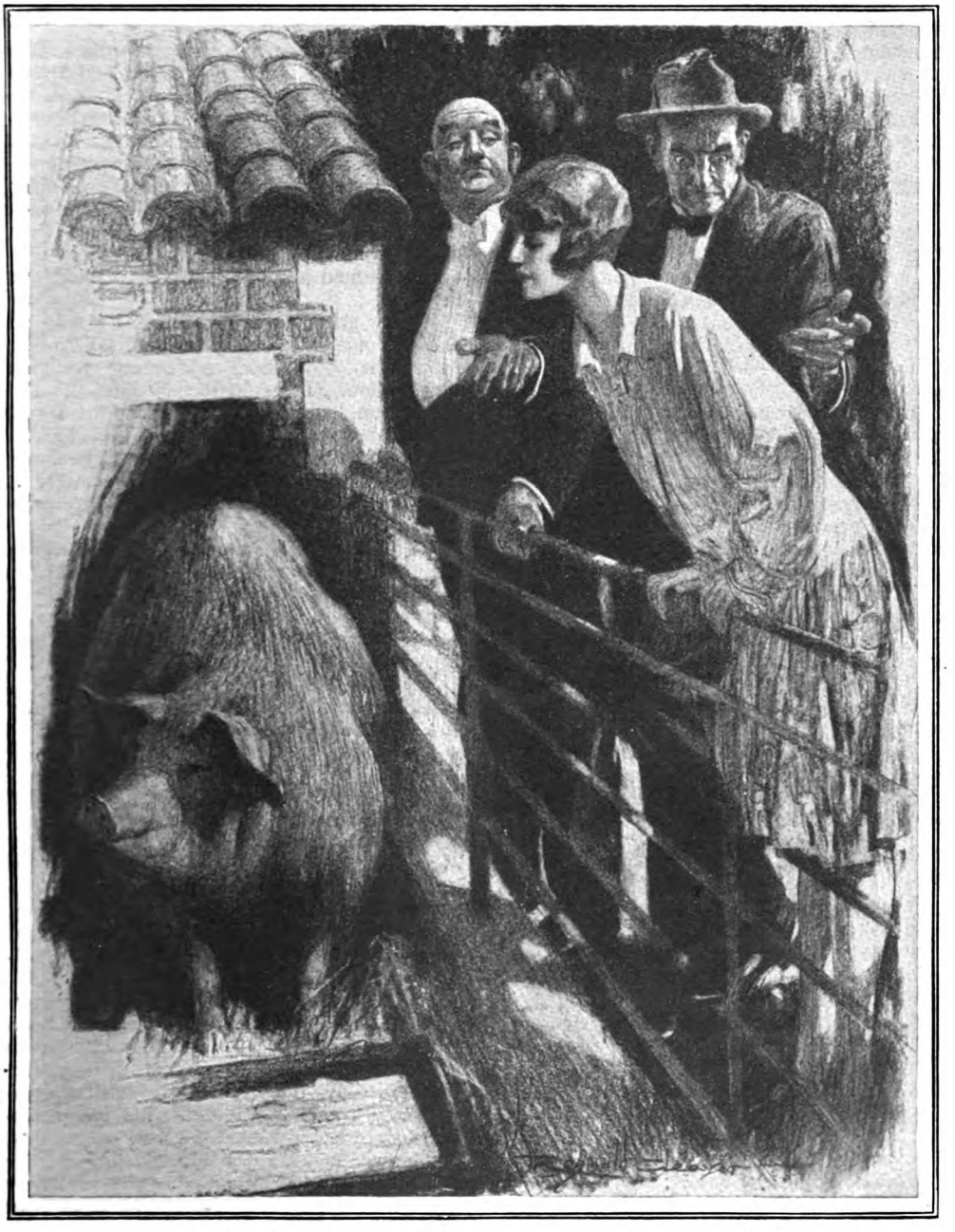
" I came here to think. I am greatly exercised about my pig, Empress of Blandings. For two days she has refused her food, and young Belford says she will not eat until she hears the proper call or cry. He very kindly taught it to me, but unfortunately I have forgotten it."

" I wonder you had the nerve to ask Jimmy to teach you pig-calls, considering the way you're treating him."

" But——"

" Like a leper, or something. And all I can say is that, if you remember this call of his, and it makes the Empress eat, you ought to be ashamed of yourself if you still refuse to let me marry him."

" My dear," said Lord Emsworth, earnestly, " if through young Belford's instrumentality



There was an inquiring grunt. The next moment the sacking that covered the doorway was pushed aside, and the noble animal emerged.

Empress of Blandings is induced to take nourishment once more, there is nothing I will refuse him—nothing."

"Honour bright?"

"I give you my solemn word."

"You won't let Aunt Constance bully you out of it?"

Lord Emsworth drew himself up.

"Certainly not,' he said, proudly. "I am always ready to listen to your Aunt

Constance's views, but there are certain matters where I claim the right to act according to my own judgment." He paused and stood musing. " It began with the word ' Pig '——"

From somewhere near at hand music made itself heard. The servants' hall, its day's labours ended, was refreshing itself with the housekeeper's gramophone. To Lord Emsworth the strains were merely an additional annoyance. He was not fond of music. It reminded him of his younger son Frederick, a flat but persevering songster both in and out of the bath.

" Yes, I can distinctly recall as much as that. Pig—Pig——"

" WHO——"

Lord Emsworth leaped in the air. It was as if an electric shock had been applied to his person.

" WHO stole my heart away ? " howled the gramophone. " WHO—— ? "

The peace of the summer night was shattered by a triumphant shout.

" Pig-HOO-o-o-o-ey ! "

A window opened. A large, bald head appeared. A dignified voice spoke.

" Who is there ? Who is making that noise ? "

" Beach ! " cried Lord Emsworth. " Come out here at once."

" Very good, your lordship."

And presently the beautiful night was made still more lovely by the added attraction of the butler's presence.

" Beach, listen to this."

" Very good, your lordship."

" Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey ! "

" Very good, your lordship."

" Now you do it."

" I, your lordship ? "

" Yes. It's a way you call pigs."

" I do not call pigs, your lordship," said the butler, coldly.

" What do you want Beach to do it for ? " asked Angela.

" Two heads are better than one. If we both learn it, it will not matter should I forget it again."

" By Jove, yes ! Come on, Beach. Push it over the thorax," urged the girl, eagerly. " You don't know it, but this is a matter of life and death. 'At-a-boy, Beach ! Inflate the lungs and go to it."

It had been the butler's intention, prefacing his remarks with the statement that he had been in service at the castle for eighteen years, to explain frigidly to Lord Emsworth that it was not his place to stand in the moonlight practising pig-calls. If, he would have gone on to add, his lordship saw the matter from a different angle, then it was his, Beach's, painful duty to tender his resignation, to become effective one month from that day.

But the intervention of Angela made this impossible to a man of chivalry and heart. A paternal fondness for the girl, dating from the days when he had stooped to enacting—and very convincingly, too, for his was a figure that lent itself to the impersonation—the *rôle* of a hippopotamus for her childish amusement, checked the words he would have uttered. She was looking at him with bright eyes, and even the rendering of pig-noises seemed a small sacrifice to make for her sake.

" Very good, your lordship," he said in a low voice, his face pale and set in the moonlight. " I shall endeavour to give satisfaction. I would merely advance the suggestion, your lordship, that we move a few steps farther away from the vicinity of the servants' hall. If I were to be overheard by any of the lower domestics, it would weaken my position as a disciplinary force."

" What chumps we are ! " cried Angela, inspired. " The place to do it is outside the Empress's sty. Then, if it works, we'll see it working."

Lord Emsworth found this a little abstruse, but after a moment he got it.

" Angela," he said, " you are a very intelligent girl. Where you get your brains from, I don't know. Not from my side of the family."

THE bijou residence of the Empress of Blandings looked very snug and attractive in the moonlight. But beneath even the beautiful things of life there is always an underlying sadness. This was supplied in the present instance by a long, low trough, only too plainly full to the brim of succulent mash and acorns. The fast, obviously, was still in progress.

The sty stood some considerable distance from the castle walls, so that there had been ample opportunity for Lord Emsworth to rehearse his little company during the journey. By the time they had ranged themselves against the rails, his two assistants were letter-perfect.

" Now," said his lordship.

There floated out upon the summer night a strange composite sound that sent the birds roosting in the trees above shooting off their perches like rockets. Angela's clear soprano rang out like the voice of the village blacksmith's daughter. Lord Emsworth contributed a reedy tenor. And the bass notes of Beach probably did more to startle the birds than any other one item in the programme.

They paused and listened. Inside the Empress's boudoir there sounded the move-

ment of a heavy body. There was an inquiring grunt. The next moment the sacking that covered the doorway was pushed aside, and the noble animal emerged.

"Now!" said Lord Emsworth again.

Once more that musical cry shattered the silence of the night. But it brought no responsive movement from Empress of Blandings. She stood there motionless, her nose elevated, her ears hanging down, her eyes everywhere but on the trough where, by rights, she should now have been digging in and getting hers. A chill disappointment crept over Lord Emsworth, to be succeeded by a gust of petulant anger.

"I might have known it," he said bitterly. "That young scoundrel was deceiving me. He was playing a joke on me."

"He wasn't," cried Angela, indignantly. "Was he, Beach?"

"Not knowing the circumstances, miss, I cannot venture an opinion."

"Well, why has it no effect, then?" demanded Lord Emsworth.

"You can't expect it to work right away. We've got her stirred up, haven't we? She's thinking it over, isn't she? Once more will do the trick. Ready, Beach?"

"Quite ready, miss."

"Then when I say three. And this time, Uncle Clarence, do please for goodness' sake not yowl like you did before. It was enough to put any pig off. Let it come out quite easily and gracefully. Now, then. One, two—three!"

The echoes died away. And as they did so a voice spoke.

"Community singing?"

"Jimmy!" cried Angela, whisking round.

"Hullo, Angela! Hullo, Lord Emsworth! Hullo, Beach!"

"Good evening, sir. Happy to see you once more."

"Thanks. I'm spending a few days at the Vicarage with my father. I got down here by the five-five."

Lord Emsworth cut peevishly in upon these civilities.

"Young man," he said, "what do you mean by telling me that my pig would respond to that cry? It does nothing of the kind."

"You can't have done it right."

"I did it precisely as you instructed me. I have had, moreover, the assistance of Beach here and my niece Angela——"

"Let's hear a sample."

Lord Emsworth cleared his throat.

"Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!"

James Belford shook his head.

"Nothing like it," he said. "You want to begin the 'Hoo' in a low minor of two quarter notes in four-four time. From this build gradually to a higher note, until at last the voice is soaring in full crescendo, reaching F sharp on the natural scale and dwelling for two retarded half-notes, then breaking into a shower of accidental grace-notes."

"God bless my soul!" said Lord Emsworth, appalled. "I shall never be able to do it."

"Jimmy will do it for you," said Angela. "Now that he's engaged to me, he'll be one of the family and always popping about here. He can do it every day till the show is over."

James Belford nodded.

"I think that would be the wisest plan. It is doubtful if an amateur could ever produce real results. You need a voice that has been trained on the open prairie and that has gathered richness and strength from competing with tornadoes. You need a manly, sunburned, wind-scorched voice with a suggestion in it of the crackling of corn husks and the whisper of evening breezes in the fodder. Like this!"

Resting his hands on the rail before him, James Belford swelled before their eyes like a young balloon The muscles on his cheek-bones stood out, his forehead became corrugated, his ears seemed to shimmer. Then, at the very height of the tension, he let it go like, as the poet beautifully puts it, the sound of a great Amen.

"Pig-HOOOOO-OOO-OOO-O-O-ey!"

They looked at him, awed. Slowly, fading off across hill and dale, the vast bellow died away. And suddenly, as it died, another, softer sound succeeded it. A sort of gulpy, gurgly, plobby, squishy, wofflesome sound, like a thousand eager men drinking soup in a foreign restaurant. And, as he heard it, Lord Emsworth uttered a cry of rapture.

The Empress was feeding.

(Another P. G. Wodehouse story, "The Bishop's Move," next month.)

A Dream Escaped

By

HELEN REDINGTON &
FRANCES BRAGG MIDDLETON

Illustrated by
J. DEWAR MILLS

Life is like that sometimes—the blowing back of the eternal curtain by the winds of romance and adventure and high emprise—the glimpse of an awesome, wondrous world. Only a glimpse, and we go back to the fainter brilliance of every day, remembering ever the beauty of a dream unrealized—or the dread of a dream escaped.

"OF course you know," said Captain Scott, squinting at the glasses on the table, "it was hereabouts the *Nancy Hanks* went down, 'leven years back?"

"The *Nancy Hanks?*" Drake Norris repeated the words blankly.

The old captain looked sharply from the young man to his sister Theo, standing blue-eyed and silent at his elbow. "Your father never told you he was aboard that boat?" The shrewd seaman's eyes narrowed. "Odd, that, and him the only man of them all left alive."

Drake shook his head. "He had been gone nearly six years, but he didn't talk much about his trip: archæologists don't, you know. We guessed he'd run on to something pretty remarkable."

"I can't understand his taking you back with him, miss." The captain's eyes lingered on the girl's intent face. "This craft ain't no fittin' place for a lady."

"Mother knew he would." Theo spoke suddenly. "She warned me—just before she died. She said—I wasn't to come."

"Why didn't you tell me that?" cried Drake.

She smiled upon him with a tenderness in excess of her mere eighteen years. "And let you go without me—and perhaps never come back? I'd not do that, Drake."

"So father was shipwrecked," mused Drake, "and around here. I wonder what he found—to make him spend these past five years getting ready to return."

"He never was one to talk," admitted the captain. "The *Nancy Hanks* went down with all hands. Named after a race-horse, she was. Owner a great racin' man. An' five-six years after I picked up your pa, close to that lee side o' nowhere he wants to be landed to-morrow.

"He was in a boat, damnedest craft I ever seen—he scuttled her just afore he come over the side. An' such clothes—outlandish lookin'—made out of silk, hand-wove. Had a sword, too, made out of steel you could mighty nigh tie bow knots in."

"I know," said Drake. "I learned to fence with it."

"Learned you to use it, eh? Reckon they must carry them kind o' fightin' irons in there, where he's takin' you."

"Sounds pretty primitive." Drake's voice warmed with excitement.

Captain Scott shook a stubborn head. "Didn't look primitive," he asserted. "Looked—somehow—magnificent. Well, as I was sayin', he come aboard six years back, cool as a chunk o' meat in January.

"'Glad to see you, Captain Scott,' he says. 'I'm fortunate to be picked up by someone who knows me. Shall we go below?'

"An' when we was alone he pulled a sack out of his pocket. Talk about pearls an' diamonds. 'Take what you want, Scott,' he says. 'And if I ask you to say nothing about where you picked me up——'

"'Doctor,' I says, 'jewels or no jewels, I ain't talkin' about other fellows' business. An' I ain't takin' nothin' that ain't mine. All I want to know,' I says, 'is where you've been these five years.'

"He looked at me out of them cold grey eyes of his. 'In Sindbad's Valley of Diamonds,' he says, an' never another word.

"I landed him back in the States, an' never heard from him again till he telegraphed wantin' I should captain this old

tramp he'd bought. I don't know what he's up to, but I'm tellin' you this: it ain't no healthy place you're p'inted to."

"What is it like?" Drake demanded.

"All I know is the reefs. Coral forests, coral islands, coral barriers, twistin' an' turnin' an' crossin' this way and that. Men have tried to explore and chart it, but either they never got very far in, or them that did never come out."

"Sindbad's Valley of Diamonds," Drake repeated. "Why, father——"

"I know." Theo spoke softly. "He always said Sindbad must have been to Atlantis."

"Atlantis!" breathed the young man. "I wonder——"

"Atlantis!" snorted the captain. "In sailor lingo, miss, that's just a way of sayin' a fellow's been somewheres he's no intention of lettin' you know any more about, and you can mind your damned—beg pardon—business."

"Just the same," persisted Drake, "it's here, in the Sargasso Sea, that famous lost continent is supposed to have sunk."

"Quite so, Drake." A cool, amused voice cut across their talk. "Clever of you to figure out that we're bound for Atlantis."

The three in the dingy cabin turned almost

The three in the dingy cabin turned almost guiltily to face the man in the doorway.

guiltily to face the man in the doorway, white-haired, grey-eyed, stubborn of jaw and mouth.

"Well," grinned Drake, "I never could see why some peak of the old continent might not be sticking up hereabouts."

"We lift the reef to-night, I think, captain?" Dr. Norris ignored his son's suggestion.

"We do," was the morose response.

"Then off to bed, Theo. And you, too, Drake. We land to-morrow and there's a hard day or two in front of us."

As the young people obeyed reluctantly their father spoke again. "May I trouble you, captain? We've a few things to talk over, you and I."

THERE broke the morning of a strenuous day. The ship lay to on a quiet sea, as near as she dared to a broad low reef, wickedly toothed and booming with the death song of the breakers that dashed themselves to pieces against its side. A haze of smoke like that which settles around a burning forest blurred what lay behind it. Captain Scott sniffed once.

"Volcano," he asserted.

Drake and Theo hung over the rail for hours, watching. Boxes and crates were brought up from the hold, lowered over the side, pulled away to some mysterious spot behind the reef, behind the smoke screen, boatload after boatload, the sailors silent, wondering, heads shaking, eyes meeting eyes in awed bewilderment.

Drake knew what was in those cases—books, tools, machinery, shoes, aluminium kitchen utensils, silver tableware, scientific instruments, medicines, rifles and ammunition. Of clothing, they had brought only one small steamer trunk for the three of them. Were they indeed bound for a country which had no communication with the outside world, no factories worthy of the name—and a decided predilection for fighting?

In the yellow haze of this mysterious disembarkation, the wild ideas of the preceding night persisted. Drake reviewed the studies with which his father had crammed his college years. Natural enough that an archæologist should train his son to the same science; natural to direct him to the unusual in language study, since a dead and gone civilization might be rebuilt out of a few marks on pebbles or from deciphering rude paintings on a cave wall. But why that strange conjunction of Basque and South American Indian—unless the place to which they were going somehow connected the two? He knew that his father held that from the prehistoric Atlantis had spread civilization in the old days both east and west, to Europe and Africa on the one hand, to South America on the other. He knew that Basque, that oldest European tongue, had word roots seemingly related to the Indian tongues of his study.

Suppose the continent had not been completely submerged in that volcanic cataclysm of far-off days—could it be that through these thousands of years life had persisted upon these islands, unknown to the civilized world, and unknowing? Had his father stumbled upon them—old Atlanteans still alive?

But Theo—why had his mother warned Theo not to come? There was, then, danger in this expedition, danger to the girl.

He shook himself. Where was he letting his imaginings lead him, and what had he to go on save that his father had said to Captain Scott that he had been in Sindbad's Valley of Diamonds?

Theo slipped her hand in his arm, drawing him back from his long absorption.

"I think father is ready for us," she said, and her voice trembled slightly.

Drake felt dazed. He ought to do something about Theo—but what?

The afternoon was far advanced when Dr. Norris hurried his son and daughter over the side. The passage through the reefs was tortuous, terrifying, leading sometimes through boiling surf that sprayed them like rain, sometimes through water so still and clear that the white sand on the bottom was distinctly visible; and then again their course was through ways so narrow that the boat grated sickeningly against the coral. Captain Scott had in his hand a chart Dr. Norris had provided, an oblong scrap of parchment, frayed and weather-stained, and he bawled his orders with the assurance of a long day's practice. The boat was beached without mishap on a smooth stretch of shining sand.

The wind that rose freshly in the afternoons had driven the smoke away. It rolled like a cloud between the island and the horizon. Even the mountain from which it must have come was hidden by it. It seemed to rise from the sea.

But the island itself was a picture cut out of a book of fairy tales; white sand that ran up to a strip of jungle growth, unbelievable trees of fronds and plumes, riotously blooming creepers, scents that intoxicated, birds that were a splurge of brilliant colour, flowers fit for the hair of Aphrodite.

"Atlantis," murmured Drake in Theo's ear, "was supposed to have been the kingdom of Neptune, you know."

The girl, her short dark hair blowing into her blue eyes, her white skirts swirling about her in the breeze, might have been the fair goddess herself, sprung from the sea-foam.

And the smile that she gave Drake held a poignancy that hurt him somehow. It was as if she knew the dark fate to which she was going, and for some reason known only to herself did not shrink.

"You'll like it along the beach." Dr. Norris, when they had landed, nodded a dismissal to the two young people, and turned from them to direct some work which he wished done by the sailors.

IDLING along the water's edge, Drake and Theo came at last, at the western edge of the island, upon a time-worn city wall, breached and ruinous. How old? Drake, estimating, felt the tide of excitement rising, rising. He knew the way the old builders had worked. And did not legend say that it was from the invading Atlanteans that the Egyptians had learned to build the pyramids?

The tower's entrance was choked with rubbish, but a bastion joined to it and hanging far out over the water was easy to scale. Holding hands like children, delightful tremors of excitement sweeping over them, they followed this out to the very end. And there they hung, staring downward, spell-bound, amazed beyond the reach of any thought of any other thing.

Far, far below them, under the clear waters of the lagoon, washed clean of all sand and *dèbris* by the scour of the tides, lay a city asleep, bereft of all motion, yet mockingly seeming to rock with the ceaseless rocking of the sea. A white city it was, of fallen columns and of columns that stood erect, of temples and palaces razed and broken, or still almost as perfect as on the day of their building. The blocks that paved its streets had buckled here and there, but in many places they still lay smooth. Around it lay the remnants of its guarding city wall, while its once tall watch towers lay in ruins.

"An earthquake did it," breathed the girl. "A quake from the volcano. Thousands of years ago. Atlantis."

"Atlantis," Drake echoed. "A city under the sea. Perhaps Germelshausen—all the old tales of sunken cities—came from this, carried abroad by the Atlanteans before the land-bridge that connected them with Europe was entirely submerged."

"Was there ever anything so beautiful in all the world?" murmured Theo. She lay along the parapet, her arms extended, holding fast. "They didn't care then. They had slaves to build for them in those days and they didn't care. Poor things! They ate and drank and cringed and toiled a little while, creating beauty their eyes could not see."

"And yet," Drake reminded her, "did it matter? There they've been lying together under the sea, master and king and slave, since the volcano woke."

"Take care lest you join them." Dr. Norris's dry comment from behind them made Drake shiver. Was it just danger of rolling off the narrow parapet that his father meant? Or were they being menaced mysteriously, from some other source?

The two young people came cautiously to their feet.

"There you are, Captain Scott," said Dr. Norris. "Does it tempt you? A sample, only a fair sample. Why, man," his voice sank low, "I've seen elephants with diamond collars and all a prince's stable shod with gold! Better change your mind and stay with us."

And in the final phrase again Drake fancied he heard a note of menace rather than of mere invitation. He was becoming too fantastic, he told himself. A scientist must hold only to facts.

Captain Scott shook his head. He stood upon the very edge of the wall, gazing tranquilly down at the lost, drowned city.

"Not for me. Not at the price. You say yourself you've small hope of ever coming out alive. No, I'd rather keep on carrying hides."

"Every man to his taste." Dr. Norris's voice held a mocking note. "Anyway, you can never say I didn't offer you your chance." He looked over his shoulder. "We'd better go back, captain. The men are ready to clear the floor of the tower."

Curiously Drake and Theo watched the work that then proceeded. Under the direction of the third mate, the sailors were forcing a passage into the tower. The sun had set by the time a sufficient quantity of the age-old accumulation of fallen stone, wind-blown sand, and vegetation had been removed to clear a path to the stair inside. Dr. Norris then climbed in alone, while the others waited.

"Lad," said Captain Scott, low-voiced in Drake's ear, "better come away with me, you and the girl. I don't like what your father's been tellin' me. It's a savage race you're goin' amongst, and he's makin' no provision to come out again."

Drake answered absently, his mind climbing that steep tower-stair with his father. "He couldn't, of course. No man with the work ahead of him that father has could say when he'll be through. Ten—twenty years—chance will have to bring him out when he's ready, just as it did six years back when you picked him up. If it's what I think it is, a tribe of lost Atlanteans, a remnant of prehistoric man, I wouldn't miss it for anything in life!"

Captain Scott sighed. "I can't under-

stand it," he said wistfully. "It isn't the gold and jewels that's pulling you. Then what is it? Your father offered me all the loot if I'd come along, but I'm not that big a fool. An' anyway, you shouldn't risk the girl. That ain't right, noways. What's to come to her if you two get pricked in the ribs with one of them fancy swords?"

Drake was startled out of his absorption. "She ought to go back with you," he said with decision. "I'm going to tell my father so."

A slender hand slipped into his.

"I won't go, Drake," said Theo. "Not without you."

Suddenly from the top of the old crumbling tower a powerful rocket shot upward toward the zenith, blazed for a moment like a new-born comet, died in trailing streamers of coloured fire. Another followed and another, an exhibition that lasted at least an hour. The sailors muttered among themselves, restlessly, uneasy, reminded no doubt of shipwreck and fire and mutiny on the high seas—the lonely, calling rockets across the void—like the dreary monotone of minute-guns.

Far, far below them, under the clear waters of the lagoon, lay a city asleep.

Drake couldn't stand it. Giving his sister into the care of Captain Scott, flash-light in hand, he started up the broken stairway after his father. His ascent was slow. The steps gaped with holes where whole blocks of stone were missing, and swarmed with bats and vermin.

Just as he stepped out on the flat top of the tower, he saw a blazing star take shape against the western sky. For a full minute it grew in volume and in brilliance, dimmed, grew bright and dimmed again, a series of dots and dashes, such a cipher as the most primitive peoples have known for centuries. A message, plainly, in answer to his father's rockets. For as Drake's torch unexpectedly lighted up his father's face, he saw that the grim tight mouth wore such a smile as Napoleon must have worn at Austerlitz.

The older man whipped about to meet the light. His voice was brusque.

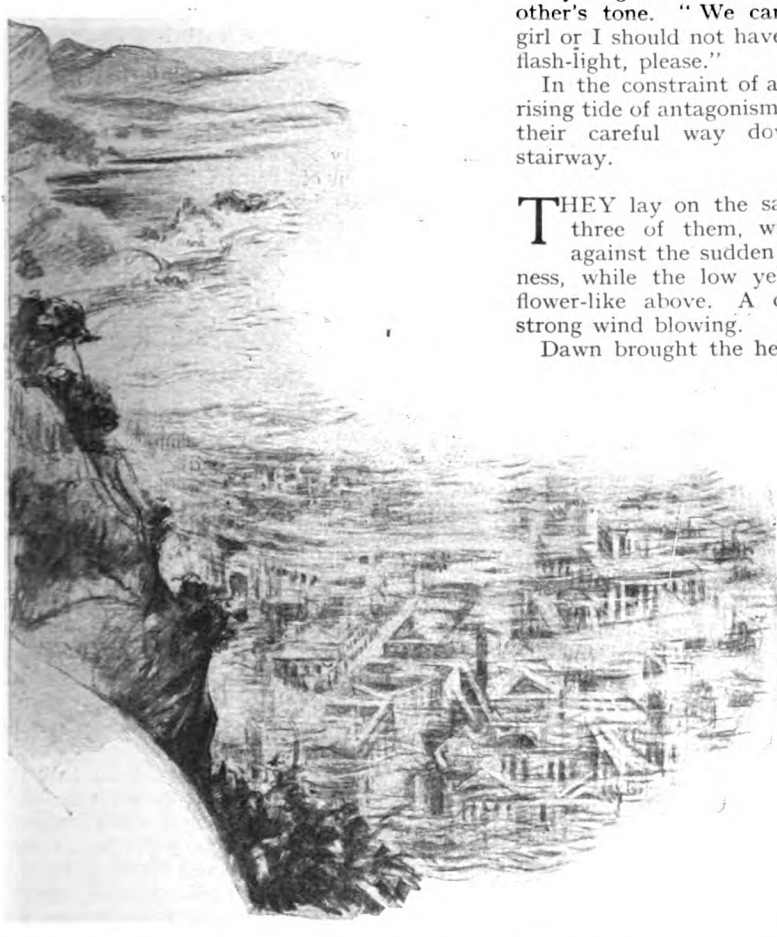
"What are you doing here, Drake? I told you to wait below. You'll have to take orders better than this if you are to be of any use to me in the place to which we're going."

"I mean to be of use to you, father." Drake spoke tranquilly. "And you'll find me dependable. But," and his tone was

suddenly as hard as the doctor's own, " I think I should know before it is too late just what you are taking us to, Theo and me."

Dr. Norris stared out into the star-bright darkness. " You are a fool, Drake." He spoke with a passion the young man was not accustomed to, knowing his father only as a man of iron restraint. " You've already guessed far more than I, with all my experience, have dared permit myself. If I knew with any certainty, should I go back like this, buying my way in——" he stopped abruptly. " Why," he began again, " I'd have all the Governments of the earth behind me, all the world of science at my heels, if I'd even hinted at what you've been saying so glibly all day long. Am I to be the world's laughing-stock? I'll know before I talk. If there is anything to say—well, we'll find a way to say it. We—shall know how to buy our way out again—just as we know, now, how to buy our way back in."

Both men were breathing audibly.



" Do you want to go back with Captain Scott, Drake? " The scientist father mocked the scientist son.

" You know I don't," cried the young man. " I'd risk my life just as you would yours. But—what about Theo? And what do you mean when you say you are buying your way in? "

The father who had, for a moment, been so companionable was gone. The autocrat returned. " That will do, Drake." And the young man froze under the ice of the other's tone. " We can't do without the girl or I should not have brought her. Your flash-light, please."

In the constraint of a silence that held a rising tide of antagonism, the two men made their careful way down the dangerous stairway.

THEY lay on the sand that night, the three of them, wrapped in blankets against the sudden chill of tropic darkness, while the low yellow stars bloomed flower-like above. A cool night, with a strong wind blowing.

Dawn brought the heat again, and acrid smoke that settled and stood still.

Four boatloads of freight were carried to the island from the ship that morning. Then Dr. Norris and Captain Scott shook hands at the water's edge. Drake knew even then that he could never forget the picture before him. The stagnant, blurring haze of smoke, the boat, manned and ready, waiting for the master, the grim faces of those two men. It was borne in upon him that Captain Scott never expected to see them again, that he was sorry, that he thought Dr. Norris a fool. But what was at the back of his father's mask-like expression he could not tell. Something hidden, secret, and—a momentary conviction warned him—evil. Almost he sprang to the boat with Theo, demanding that they should be taken back. And never know what lay hidden behind this smoke, back in these volcanic islands? He couldn't. He

was too much his father's son, too thoroughly trained for just this moment.

"Three days, remember," cautioned Dr. Norris. "If we're not here, why everything's all right. If matters slip up, we'll be here to go back with you. You know the way in by this time, captain?"

"I know the way in. An' I won't forget to come." Captain Scott looked over at Theo, his hard face working. "You're a fool to pay the price," he muttered. "For her sake, I hope I'll find you all here three days hence when I come to fetch you."

With a quick, jerky nod he joined his waiting men. The boat slipped out into the haze, was swallowed up by it. For all the heat of the noonday sun Drake felt himself grow cold. Something threatened Theo—and Captain Scott knew—blamed his father for it. Was she the price his father meant to pay to gain access to the sacred secrets of this cruel, primitive, magic-loving race upon whom they were intruding?

The heat, the heavy air, the glare of the sun that beat mercilessly in spite of the shrouding smoke—suddenly he hated them all. His long training in ancient languages, in the characteristics of prehistoric man—all meaning had dropped from that period of preparation. Curiosity, too, was dead. Only a strange new concern for Theo was left, dominating all other feelings. He was quite sure, now, of her danger. And it was too late to save her—Captain Scott had gone.

SLOWLY the sun trailed his flaming yellow banners across the sky. The wind came up and drove away the smoke. Drake and Theo wandered out along the parapet to the sunken city. But its beauty was lost to them just as its glory was long since departed. They sat on the bastion in silence, not looking at each other.

A vehement choking resentment against his father arose and mastered Drake.

"His own flesh and blood!" he blazed out bitterly. "His own flesh and blood!"

"No." Theo spoke in a voice thin as a silver thread. "Not—his flesh and blood, Drake. You mustn't think that of him—whatever happens. I'm no kin to him—not really—nor to you."

"Theo! Are you crazy?"

Drake's bewilderment linked him with the strangeness of his surroundings. The bastion seemed to rock beneath him as it must have rocked on that fearful day when the quake had sundered the city.

"It isn't true!"

"Yes, it's true." She spoke so simply that unbelief was impossible. "When mother died—your mother, but I loved her! I loved her just as much, Drake!—when she died three years ago I found the papers—in a book—her Bible, Drake. She wouldn't have kept them there if it hadn't been true. I was left on your doorstep, Drake, in a basket, a little, nameless waif. It was kind of them to make me theirs—like that——"

Yes, the bastion was surely rocking. All this that Theo was saying was a part of that far-away, sunken life from the dead city down below the rippling tidal water.

"All the more," Drake heard himself say dully, "he has no right. If you're not his—though that's absurd—but if it were true, he has even less right to bring you here—to sell you."

He stopped, aghast at the words he had just said. Was that, really, his thought? Was Theo to be *sold* to these savages to buy immunity for him and for his father to search in their old ruins?

"We don't know that he means to do that."

The girl spoke with a calm rationality that dispersed something of the unreality in which Drake's mind was moving.

"We don't know it at all."

Yet there was no conviction in her tone.

"No, we don't know." The young man's voice steadied. "But," he added savagely, "we're going to find out."

"I wanted you to know, so that you wouldn't feel quite so badly—if—anything did happen to me."

"Not feel so badly!" Drake found himself shouting, with a mounting bewilderment, anger, and indignation. "If you're not my sister," his voice dropped, "are you any the less—Theo—*you?*"

She rose to her feet in quick confusion. "I—wanted you to know——" she stammered again, and started swiftly to retrace her steps to the beach, where Dr. Norris was calmly laying out food for them upon the sand.

They managed to eat a little, to talk in desultory fashion. But the eyes of the two young people, avoiding each other's faces, were constantly seeking the sea. What new thing was it that loomed before them? Without understanding the change, Drake knew that now, even more than before, he must save this girl from the fate his father had prepared for her. This sister who was not a sister must not be their scapegoat.

"I'm going to the top of the tower, Drake. Do you care to come?" In his father's sinister glance Drake guessed that the man, somehow, knew his thoughts, was warning him against interference.

"Do you mind?" Drake asked the girl.

His father's frown deepened. "Why should she?" he asked, harshly. "You are not Theo's bodyguard, you know, Drake."

With a gesture she bade him go. There

was, of course, no possible danger to her here on the beach, and he did want an opportunity to come to an understanding with his father.

SO the two men, the unfought battle coming slowly toward a decision between them, climbed the tower in silence. The sun was half-way down, showing a fiery semicircle on the rim of the sea. And in the instant that it hung there, as if poised between the upper sky and the abyss beyond the world, a shadow showed against it, picked out in black like an oxidized carving on a shield of shining brass, a three-banked galley, perfectly drawn, beautiful as the painting on an old Greek vase. A moment only. The sun sank. Twilight marched swiftly into the velvet blackness of the southern night.

A grunt, a faint chuckle from Dr. Norris. "Think of putting to sea in that," he said, suddenly warm, genial. "I don't know whether the old Greeks learned to build it from these boys' forbears or the other way around. That's one of the things for us to find out."

"Where will they take us?"

Drake, bemused by the sight, became momentarily a small boy, looking to his father for reassurance.

"Not even I know that," said Norris. "They took me in blindfold before, and brought me out so, twisting, turning, the gulf-weed catching at their oars. Not far, but nobody knows the path—nobody outside, I mean."

"What are they like?"

Drake's voice was hushed, as if the men of the distant trireme could hear.

"At least not savages; don't expect that. They might easily be that great race described by Plato: all the signs of an ancient culture and power are still upon them."

Something of the man's caution and reserve had been broken down at sight of the coming vessel.

"You think," Drake's voice trembled, "that Atlantis was not completely submerged, that some of its mountain tops remained as islands—and inhabited?"

"Perhaps—perhaps—at least they are like no other island tribe that I have seen. Tall, broad of forehead, short-armed, strong and war-like. Quetzalcoatal, the Fair God of the Aztecs, might have come of them. Perhaps they are——" he stopped abruptly; it was not like him to yield, even in his present mood of exultation, to unfounded theorizing.

"But they must have maintained their connection with parts of Europe—England, say, or Spain—much longer than anyone has ever suspected," answered Drake, who had none of his father's restraint. His imagination, unleashed, knew no check. "Otherwise, how did they learn the use of steel, like that sword you brought back?"

"They've reached about the day of Arthur, you'll find," his father said. "Would you engage in tournament, Drake, with a lady's token on your arm?" The old mocking note had returned, and suddenly Drake remembered Theo.

"Shall I need to?" he asked, steadily. "For Theo?"

"Perhaps, perhaps." Dr. Norris spoke irascibly, his mood of confidence ended. "Come, we must be getting back." And he rose to his feet.

"Father," Drake persisted, glamour once more faded into drab reality, "I want to know what you intend to do with Theo."

"Do with her? Do with her? Why, whatever I please. Your torch, Drake." The older man started toward the stair.

But the sharp shadows of the electric torch were misleading, the rough stones uneven, the gaps apparent only too late. Though Drake's trembling hand tried to steady the beam before his father's feet, Dr. Norris missed his footing, stumbled, caught blindly at the wall for support.

And a slender sinister serpent shadow flickered from out a crevice in the crumbling wall, hung for a second on the man's hand, was gone.

The stricken man groaned once, let himself sink to the stone floor—one more added to what must have been a long, long list of souls who had fled to freedom from that ominous place in days long dead. For the doctor was dying. Drake realized it without knowing how he knew.

But when he would have rushed down for antidotes and dressings his father stopped him peremptorily.

"By the time you got back, Drake, I'd be stone-dead. No use. My luck has turned against me, that's all. I've always won before, always. This time I lose. To die of a trifle—a pin-prick like that! 'A kingdom lost for the lack of a horse-shoe nail!' Well—but listen, Drake! You've got to go on."

Even so soon the poison was beginning to show the havoc it could work. The man's features were drawn with the effort at concentration he was making.

"There is so much to say," he muttered, "and the time is so short. When I was shipwrecked, eleven years ago, I was found by these people, bound, blindfolded, and taken by them to their king. I think they meant me for sacrifice to their god, the Great White Bull—yes, Drake, they worship the Bull of Neptune, just as did their

ancestors, if they are, as we think, the remnant of the Atlanteans. But the king would not part with me. I was granted a five years' reprieve and made free of that city—a city set upon a hill, surrounded by two mounds and three moats, cut through by a great canal that leads down to the sea, just as Plato said.

"A great people, Drake, but cruel, childishly so, as beauty-loving as the old Greeks, as fond as the Romans were of games that ran with blood. The Spanish bull-fighting is a relic of their teaching. And their king is a hard man, come of a reckless line. But I could have tamed him, knowing what I know."

Drake, listening to this rambling yet coherent talk, knowing that his father's life was ebbing, cursed his own impotence.

And his father's words engraved themselves upon his mind indelibly.

"He'll be here at dawn," muttered the man. "Meet him on the bastion; he'll come in that way, across the sunken city, the only landing place for his royal galley."

The picture that had etched itself against the setting sun's disc flashed again before Drake's eyes. It would be there for them at dawn—for him and Theo—alone, without their father. Cold fear gripped him.

"I'm afraid of one thing, Drake. When he sees her, he'll want Theo. I could have managed it, but you—— You see, when they let me go, it was on condition that I should bring back to take my place a young girl, a sacrifice to the Bull of Neptune. She would have been their priestess for a year, before the sacrifice. And through her we should have gained all our rights to dig and explore even within the sacred grotto itself. If he wants her you'll not be able to do a thing, Drake. He'll no doubt kill you at once. How," his voice was fretful, "could I have known she would turn out so beautiful?

"You must manage him somehow. Magic is your only weapon. Set yourself up as his master magician, that was what I meant to do. You'll find all the equipment. They are the fathers of voodoo, remember, and of witchcraft. It is your only chance."

Horror was turning Drake numb.

"Captain Scott," he stammered, "if I signalled for him——"

The dying man laughed weakly. "That might hasten his death," he said, ironically. "Do you fancy they mean to let him and his men escape, knowing the channel? That was in the agreement I made with them."

"You knew—you meant to let them—kill him?"

Even in the moment of death, Drake's arraignment of his father was hot.

"You heard me offer him his chance. If he had chosen to come with me, I could have used him. He did not. What did his life matter?" The tone was impatient, even in its weakness. "Or yours or the girl's—in the light of the thing I was going there to accomplish?"

FOR a time, after that, his fancy wandered. Then, "Photograph everything, Drake. Remember, pictures will be your only proof." His voice grew oddly far-off. The venom from the sting of the serpent had reached his brain by now. His breathing was laboured, his speech confused. Yet it was characteristic of the man, as Drake was able to realize even through the nightmare of the hour, that he still thought only of the surest means of putting through his scheme, not at all of his own fast-ebbing life or of what might come to him thereafter.

Presently he spoke again, though only in gasps. "When you're—ready—escape—alone—it's your only—chance—sorry about—Theo—perhaps I ought to tell you—she is not——" That was all.

So Drake knew then, even if he had doubted it, that what the girl had told him was absolutely true.

He did not feel much. The thing that had happened to him, the tale he had heard, the ordeal that lay before him, numbed him. The charm of Atlantis, the call to unravel her mystery, was gone. Only dull fear possessed him. Captain Scott was not to return until the third day; or was that a mistake? Were these savages to murder him aboard his ship before that time and throw him into the sea, another sacrifice to Neptune, their god?

The galley would come at daybreak, with its king—a cruel man—a lover of beauty—he would see Theo—what chance had Drake to save her?

Like a sleep-walker he did what decency demanded for his father. He could not drag the body down those fearful stairs. He could only compose it, throw his coat over the dead face, and leave it. At last he stumbled down the steps alone. He would come back to-morrow, he told himself—if he still lived.

Theo was waiting for him at the foot of the tower, and at sight of her all his terrors doubled. What could he do to save her? And what would he not be willing to do for her?

He took her hands, his own chill and trembling, and led her away from that accursed place to the open sands.

Then, there being no help for it, he told her all that had taken place.

"Was he—afraid?" Theo asked.

The king advanced, hand extended, upon the girl . . . . and Drake's hand dropped upon his sword hilt.

"No," said Drake. "He was always a believer in the rule of chance. For all his cruel concentration on his own aims, he took this last turn of the wheel gamely."

"Isn't it possible, Drake," the girl's voice was hardly more than a whisper, "that he was right? That the thing he was trying to do was worth—sacrificing all the rest of us for? Perhaps—his mantle has fallen—on you—perhaps you ought to go through with his plans, Drake."

"Good God, Theo, you don't know what you're saying!" Drake cried. And suddenly, without premeditation or conscious volition, his arms were about her, he was holding her tight and tighter against him. And as he felt her small and soft within his arms, his brain cleared. There was just one thing worth the struggle of living—this sweet girl whom he had known all his life.

"Theo," he whispered, his lips slipping along the smoothness of her cheek to her mouth. And a warmth of passion, very shy, very young, was born in both of them.

"I love you, Theo," he breathed.

"I love you, Drake," she answered, solemnly.

So he held her until the tremor that had shaken her body subsided, until her cold flesh warmed, until she drowsed against his shoulder, sitting there side by side in the sand.

"I never felt toward you the way other girls did about their brothers," she murmured once. "I always knew you were—different—wonderful."

"You sweet thing," Drake answered. But his thoughts were very far away. With Theo's kiss he had taken upon himself his man's obligations. Somehow he must save her. Himself, too, if that might be, but he *must save her.*

The galley would be there at dawn—across the sunken city—they were to await it on the parapet.

Then what?

Somehow he could not check the nightmarish imaginings that presented themselves; just as one may dream and know that he dreams and yet be powerless to halt the unrolling film of happenings.

Sitting there, Theo warm against his shoulder, he saw the dawn come upon them, and with it the galley. He pictured the dark, naked oarsmen, sweating from their exertions, suddenly cease their efforts as the shadowy vessel slid to its landing.

The scene shifted then, unreasoningly as does a dream, to the sandy beach where he and Theo stood alone, surrounded by strange, uncouth, gaping faces—pressed upon by bodies somehow gorgeous in barbaric splendour of colour. He saw gleaming head-dresses and necklaces of shell-work and of jewels. Then the crowd parted like the Red Sea of old, and down the path thus made came an imperial figure, huge of frame, his face marred by self-indulgence—another Nero, garmented like Nero, rich, colourful, his crown flashing fire-like in the early morning light.

Drake, steeling himself for this meeting, saw the eyes glint as they fell upon Theo, saw the halt that proclaimed his surprise.

The full lips parted; there fell from the strange man's tongue a succession of sounds that somehow translated themselves to Drake's fogged brain as a demand for his father.

In halting Basque and Indian phrases he explained the death that had come upon the tower-top.

The king's eyes travelled upwards, and then leaped back to Theo. The man advanced, hand extended, upon the girl, and Drake Norris, in this strange fantasy, perceived the hopelessness of her position.

His hand dropped upon his sword hilt—somehow, in his dream, he had armed himself—and he drew the shining blade, extending it, a slender gleaming barrier, between the girl and the king.

An ominous grunting gurgle of sound issued from the throats of the surrounding natives—they were pressing closer—he would never be able to reach the king with that sharp sword-point——

"DRAKE! Drake!" Theo was crying, shaking him, half sobbing. "Are you asleep? You have been groaning horribly."

No, he told her, he had not slept. Nor had he. Not once had he lost consciousness of the stars wheeling overhead, of the black rolling mass of the sea before them. Nevertheless, he had seen that which would happen at dawn—unless he could find a way to prevent——

Dully he rose to his feet.

"We must meet them on the parapet," he said. And then he added: "I must have my sword." So had the dream-image taken possession of him.

"Your sword, Drake?" Theo questioned wonderingly.

"Yes. Father said I might have to fight in tournament for you. He didn't guess it would be here, on these sands. If I can only make him fight me—not just overwhelm me with his men——" He began to kick about among the cases.

Theo, realizing perhaps that he must be doing something, held the electric torch. "Let me give you some light," she said, practically.

With a crowbar from the tool-chest, Drake wrenched open the case in which he

knew the blade had been packed. And with a feeling of intense satisfaction he buckled its belt about his waist. A man, armed——

"Oh, what a fool!" he cried suddenly. "If they've only advanced to the age of Arthur, they know nothing of firearms!"

With his crowbar he vigorously attacked a case of rifles, took out six, loaded them, and carried them with an extra supply of ammunition out to the end of the bastion.

"We'll be waiting for them here," he told Theo, grimly. "Whatever happens afterwards, at least they can tell their grandchildren we gave them a warm reception." And then, under his breath, "It's our only chance. They know nothing of firearms."

He had thought the waiting would be hard, but it wasn't. For one thing, there existed no uncertainty. With his own eyes he had seen the galley. He knew that it was coming. And it is a strange trait of the human mind—and not more strange than merciful—that when peril is imminent, when by no known means can it be turned aside, when desperate fighting is the only course possible, then even a coward takes hold and fights and knows no fear. Only when there is hope is there timidity or vacillation.

And now—he had Theo. To him it was almost as if she had been created that day. Always before his sister—now, he hardly knew what—himself, a part of him—his, to protect.

"Whatever comes, you mustn't kill me, Drake," she said suddenly. "You might live, and I don't want you to have that to remember. There is always the sea."

"Neptune," he muttered, in renewed apprehension, "claiming the sacrifice."

"Well," she answered lightly, "there are worse deaths than to be claimed by the god of ocean. I wouldn't mind, Drake. I mean—it's worth it to me—to-night, you know. I never could have told you otherwise."

"As if I shouldn't have found out!" he cried.

She laughed at him in tender mockery.

Drake's watch had stopped and they had no means of telling the time. The wheeling procession of the unfamiliar southern stars meant nothing to them. They only knew by the change in the sea's myriad voices that the tide had turned, was rolling in tumbling creaming breakers up the beach, across the sunken city, roaring among the broken heaps of stone below the bastion.

IT was the girl who first saw their peril when it came, betrayed by a dancing light not far away and coming swiftly nearer. To their eyes, accustomed to the dark, it loomed in silhouette against the starlit sky. A large craft of many oars, two-masted, triple-decked, borne strongly onward by the inrushing tide, by the powerful churning oars. Flashes of light came from the swaying torches in the waist, throwing this section and that into sudden short-lived illumination. Now the brutish face of a naked rower, now the cheek and shoulder of the towering figurehead would spring into the glare, as suddenly to be eclipsed again. Only once did they catch sight of the master on the upper deck, and, beside the master, of a robed and stately figure, topped by a gleaming casque.

Drake's hand, as in his dream, fell to his sword's hilt.

For an instant only the imperious, passionate face of a born ruler was thrown into bold relief against the straining sail. A scarred and swarthy face, no longer young.

Drake's hands were ice, his brain half-numbed, when he rose, slowly, automatically, to his knees. "They know nothing of firearms," was the only thought he had. He might have thrown a stone to the galley's deck then, she had drawn so close. But he did better. He fired point-blank, shot after shot in rapid succession, at the flaring torches in the waist and put them all out.

A long, high, savagely bestial scream of naked unmixed fear followed close on the heels of the report. The galley rocked as the oars dipped out of time or not at all.

"Magic," Drake muttered. "They'll think it is some new magic. Father was right; that is our chance."

Out of control, the vessel swept with the tide beneath the bastion, crashed head on against the crumbled fragments of the city wall.

But the oarsmen were trained by fear, and some of them held to their task. A voice, strident and grim as from long years of unquestioned authority, bawled a guttural order and there was the sound of oars furiously backing water, and the galley rushed out into the light of the stars again.

"If they wait for daylight," said Drake, calmly, "we're done. I wish I knew whether they did for Scott before they came after us."

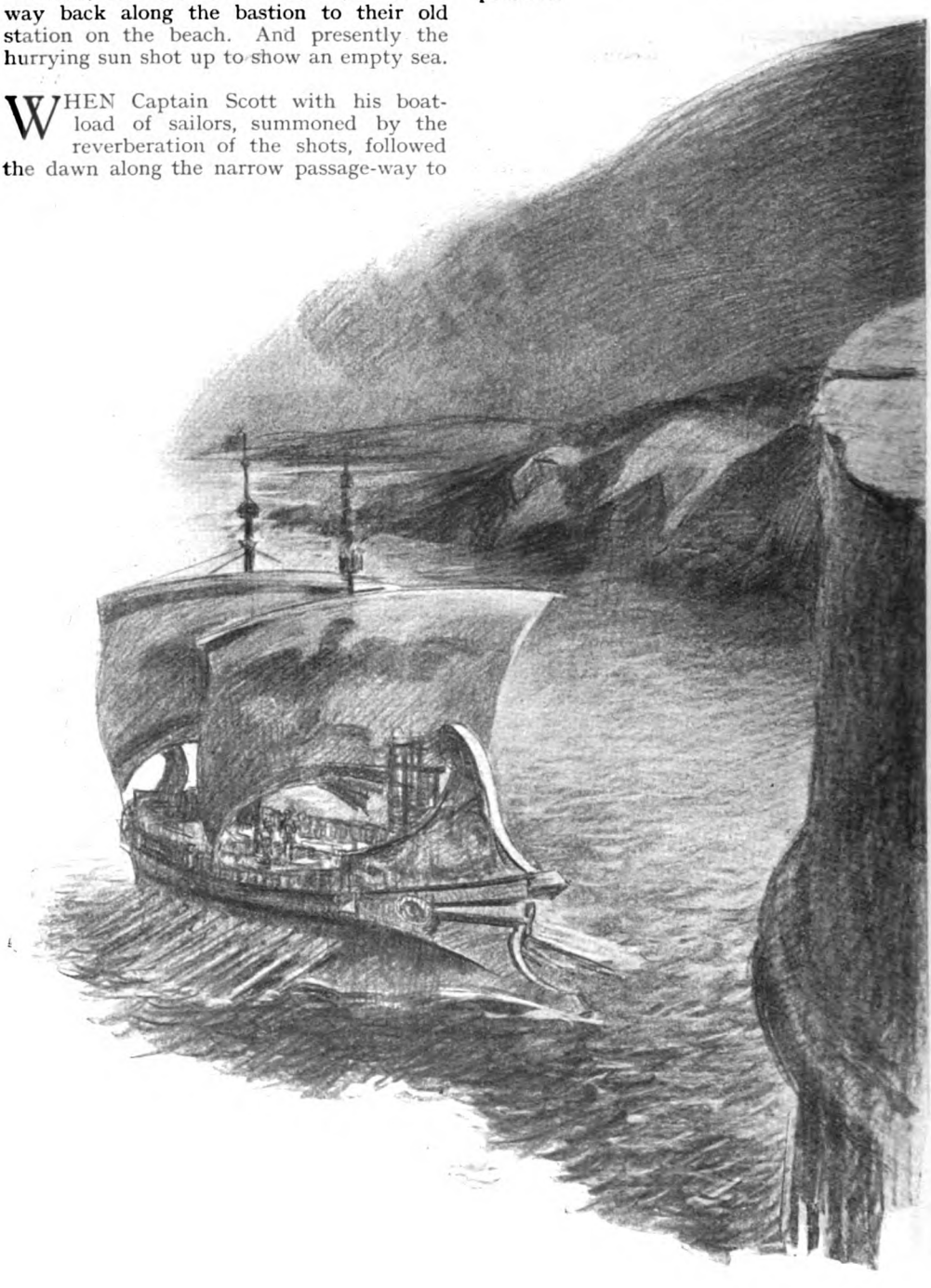
Picking up another rifle, he fired at random into the shadowy body of the trireme. A shrill scream of agony proclaimed his success. He must have hit one of the rowers, for there was a sudden cessation of effort, and the galley, caught again by the force of the tide, was swept against the bastion. The vessel heeled half over, tipping the top of her foremast against a far-flung flying buttress. The shrill, despairing keening of her people rose above the sound of ripping wood, of churning water. Her silhouette plunged headlong, her stern lifting for an instant against the sky like the

head of a rearing horse. The inrushing tide engulfed her.

Drake, Theo's cold hand in his, made his way back along the bastion to their old station on the beach. And presently the hurrying sun shot up to show an empty sea.

WHEN Captain Scott with his boat-load of sailors, summoned by the reverberation of the shots, followed the dawn along the narrow passage-way to the beach, there awaited him only a lonely boy and girl, arms entwined.

Drake told his story as briefly as was possible.



It was the girl who first saw their peril—a large craft of many oars, two-masted, triple-decked, borne strongly onward by the inrushing tide.

"But all these cases," protested the captain when the young man demanded that they should put off at once.

"Leave them," answered Drake. "We take nothing back with us."

"Your father's body——"

"We will bury it here. Nothing, I tell you"—his voice was thin with hysteria—"that might tie us to this island is to go with us."

"And you ain't even goin' to let us examine that sunken galley—there must be gold, gems——" Captain Scott's eyes shone. Here was booty without the trouble of going after it.

"Don't touch it," cried Drake Norris. "Neptune has had his sacrifice. Take us away!"

Life is like that sometimes—the blowing back of the eternal curtain by the winds of romance and adventure and high emprise—the glimpse of an awesome, wondrous world. Only a glimpse, and we go back to the fainter brilliance of every day, remembering ever the beauty of a dream unrealized—or the dread of a dream escaped.

HOUDINI THE ENIGMA

By

A. CONAN DOYLE

HARRY HOUDINI.

WHO was the greatest medium-baiter of modern times? Undoubtedly Houdini. Who was the greatest physical medium of modern times? There are some of us who would be inclined to give the same answer. I do not see how it can ever now be finally and definitely proved, but circumstantial evidence may be very strong, as Thoreau said when he found a trout in the milk jug. I foresee that the subject will be debated for many years to come, so perhaps my opinion, since I knew him well, and always entertained this possibility in my mind, may be of interest. If others add their experience in order to support or disprove my own surmises, then some result may eventually be obtained.

I will first give some of my own personal impressions of Houdini. I will then dwell on some phases of his career which show his singular character, and I will then endeavour to give the argument as to the source of his unique powers.

Let me say, in the first instance, that in a long life which has touched every side of humanity, Houdini is far and away the most curious and intriguing character whom I have ever encountered. I have met better men, and I have certainly met very many worse ones, but I have never met a man who had such strange contrasts in his nature, and whose actions and motives it was more difficult to foresee or to reconcile.

I will first, as is only proper, dwell upon the great good which lay in his nature. He had the essential masculine quality of courage to a supreme degree. Nobody has ever done, and nobody in all human probability will ever do, such reckless feats of daring. His whole life was one long succession of them, and when I say that amongst them was the leaping from one aeroplane to another, with handcuffed hands, at the height of three thousand feet, one can form an idea of the extraordinary lengths that he would go. In this, however, as in much more that concerned him, there was a certain psychic element which he was ready to freely admit. He told me that a voice which was independent of his own reason or judgment told him what to do and how to do it. So long as he obeyed the voice he was assured of safety. "It all comes as easy as stepping off a log," said he to me, "but I have to wait for the

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voice. You stand there before a jump, swallowing the yellow stuff that every man has in him. Then at last you hear the voice and you jump. Once I jumped on my own and I nearly broke my neck." This was the nearest admission that I ever had from him that I was right in thinking that there was a psychic element which was essential to every one of his feats.

Apart from his amazing courage he was remarkable for his cheery urbanity in every-day life. One could not wish a better companion so long as one was with him, though he might do and say the most unexpected things when one was absent. He was, like most Jews, estimable in his family relationships. His love for his dead mother seemed to be the ruling passion of his life, which he expressed on all sorts of public occasions in a way which was, I am sure, sincere, but is strange to our colder Western blood. There were many things in Houdini which were as Oriental as there were in our own Disraeli. He was devoted also to his wife, and with good reason, for she is a woman of a rare type, but again his intimacy showed itself in unconventional ways. When in his examination before the Senatorial Committee he was hard-pressed by some defender of Spiritualism who impugned his motives in his violent and vindictive campaign against mediums, his answer was to turn to his wife and to say, "I have always been a good boy, have I not?"

ANOTHER favourable side of his character was his charity. I have not had any direct evidence of this, but I have heard, and am quite prepared to believe, that he was the last refuge of the down-and-outer, especially if he belonged to his own profession of showman.

So much for his virtues—and most of us would be very glad to have as goodly a list. But all he did was extreme, and there was something to be placed in the other scale.

A prevailing feature of his character was a vanity which was so obvious and childish that it became more amusing than offensive. I can remember, for example, that when he introduced his brother to me, he did it by saying, "This is the brother of the great Houdini." This without any twinkle of humour and in a perfectly natural manner.

This enormous vanity was combined with a passion for publicity which knew no bounds, and which must at all costs be gratified. There was no consideration of any sort which would restrain him if he saw his way to an advertisement.

It was this desire to play a constant public part which had a great deal to do with his furious campaign against Spiritualism. He knew that the public took a keen interest in the matter and that there was unlimited publicity to be had from it. He perpetually offered large sums to any medium who would do this or that, knowing well that even in the unlikely event of the thing being done he could always raise some objection and get out of it. Sometimes his tactics were too obvious to be artistic. In Boston he arrived by prearrangement before a great crowd at the City Hall and walked solemnly up the steps with ten thousand dollars' worth of stock in his hand, which represented one of his perennial stakes against phenomena. This was in connection with his engagement on a tour of the music-halls.

I am quite prepared to think that Houdini's campaign against mediums did temporary good so far as false mediums goes, but it was so indiscriminate and accompanied by so much which was intolerant and offensive that it turned away the sympathy and help which Spiritualists who are anxious for the cleanliness of their own movement would gladly have given him. The unmasking of false mediums is our urgent duty, but when we are told that, in spite of our own evidence and that of three generations of mankind, there are no real ones, we lose interest, for we know that we are speaking to an ignorant man. At the same time, the States, and in a lesser degree our own people, do need stern supervision. I admit that I underrated the corruption in the States. What first brought it home to me was that my friend Mrs. Crandon told me that she had received price lists from some firm which manufactures fraudulent instruments for performing tricks. If such a firm can make a living there must be some villainy about, and a more judicious Houdini might well find a useful field of activity. It is these hyenas who retard our progress.

THERE was a particular Hall in Boston which Houdini used for his tirades against the spirits. Some weeks after his campaign a curious and disagreeable phenomenon broke out there. Showers of gravel or of small pebbles fell continually among the audience, and several people suffered minor injuries. A police watch was kept up for some time, and eventually it was shown that a staid *employé*, whose record was an excellent one, was in the habit, without rhyme or reason, of stealing up to the gallery and throwing these missiles down into the stalls. When tried for the offence he could only say that a senseless but overpowering impulse caused him to do it. Many psychic students would be prepared to consider that the incident would bear the interpretation of

a poltergeist on the one side and an obsession on the other.

There was another incident at Boston of a very much more serious kind, and one which bears out my assertion that where there was an advertisement to be gained Houdini was a dangerous man. The remarkable psychic powers of Mrs. Crandon, the famous "Margery," were at that time under examination by the committee of the *Scientific American*. Various members of this committee had sat many times with the Crandons, and some of them had been completely converted to the psychic explanation, while others, though unable to give any rational explanation of the phenomena, were in different stages of dissent. It would obviously be an enormous feather in Houdini's cap if he could appear on the scene and at once solve the mystery. What a glorious position to be in! Houdini laid his plans and was so sure of success that before going to Boston he wrote a letter, which I saw, to a mutual friend in London, announcing that he was about to expose her. He would have done it, too, had it not been for an interposition which was miraculous. I think well enough of Houdini to hope that he would have held his hand if he could have realized the ruin and disgrace which his success would have brought upon his victims. As it was, the thought of the tremendous advertisement swallowed up his scruples. All America was watching, and he could not resist the temptation.

He had become familiar in advance with the procedure of the Crandon circle, and with the types of phenomena. It was easy for him to lay his plans. What he failed to take into account was that the presiding spirit, Walter, the dead brother of Mrs. Crandon, was a very real and live entity, who was by no means inclined to allow his innocent sister to be made the laughing-stock of the Continent. It was the unseen Walter who checkmated the carefully-laid plans of the magician.

THE account of what occurred I take from the notes which were taken by the circle at the time. The first phenomenon to be tested was the ringing of an electric bell which could only be done by pressing down a flap of wood, well out of the reach of the medium. The room was darkened but the bell did not ring. Suddenly the angry voice of Walter was heard.

"You have put something to stop the bell ringing, Houdini, you ——" he cried.

Walter has a wealth of strong language and makes no pretence at all to be a very elevated being. They all have their use over there. On this occasion, at least, the use was evident, for when the light was turned up, there was the rubber from the end of a pencil stuck into the angle of the flap in such a way as to make it impossible that it could descend and press the bell. Of course, Houdini professed complete ignorance as to how it got there, but who else had the deft touch to do such a thing in the dark, and why was it only in his presence that such a thing occurred? It is clear that if he could say afterwards, when he had quietly removed the rubber, that his arrival had made all further trickery impossible, he would have scored the first trick in the game.

He should have taken warning and realized that he was up against powers which were too strong for him, and which might prove dangerous if provoked too far. But the letters he had written and the boasts he had made cut off his retreat. The second night landed him in a very much worse mess than the first one. He had brought with him an absurd box which was secured in front by no fewer than eight padlocks. One would have thought that it was a gorilla rather than a particularly gentle lady who was about to be confined within. The forces behind Margery showed what they thought of this contraption by bursting the whole front open the moment Margery was fastened into it. This very unexpected development Houdini endeavoured to explain away, but he found it difficult to give a reason why, if the box was so vulnerable, it was worth while to bring it with so much pomp and ceremony, with eight padlocks and many other gadgets, all the way from New York to Boston.

However, much worse was to come. The lady was put into the reconstituted box, her arms protruding through holes on each side. Houdini was observed without any apparent reason to pass his hand along the lady's arm, and so into the box. Presently, after some experiments, the lady's arms were placed inside and the attempt was to be made to ring the bell-box while only her head projected. Suddenly the terrible Walter intervened.

"Houdini, you —— blackguard!" he thundered. "You have put a rule into the cabinet. You ——! Remember, Houdini, you won't live for ever. Some day you've got to die."

The lights were turned on, and, shocking to relate, a two-foot folding rule was found lying in the box. It was a most deadly trick, for, of course, if the bell had rung Houdini would have demanded a search of the cabinet, the rule would have been found, it would, if held between the teeth, have enabled the medium to have reached and pressed down the flap of the bell-box, and

all America would have resounded next day with the astuteness of Houdini and the proven villainy of the Crandons. I do not think that even the friends of the latter could have got over the patent facts. It was the most dangerous moment of their career, and only Walter saved them from ruin.

For the moment Houdini was completely overcome, and cowered, as he well might, before the wrath of the unseen. His offence was so obvious that no better excuse occurred to him, when he had rallied his senses, than that the rule had been left there by accident by some subordinate. When one considers, however, that no other tool upon earth, neither a hammer, a chisel, nor a wrench, but only a folding two-foot rule, could have sustained the charge, one realizes how hopeless was his position. But one of Houdini's characteristics was that nothing in this world or the next could permanently abash him. He could not suggest that the Crandons had placed the rule there, for Mrs. Crandon had actually asked to have the cabinet examined after she had entered, and Houdini had refused. Yet, incredible as it may seem, he had his advertisement after all, for he flooded America with a pamphlet to say that he had shown that the Crandons were frauds, and that he had in some unspecified way exposed them.

Houdini freeing himself after he had been tied to a chair with four ropes.

To account for the phenomena he was prepared to assert that not only the doctor, but that even members of the committee were in senseless collaboration with the medium. The amazing part of the business was that other members of the committee seemed to have been overawed by the masterful conjurer, and even changed their very capable secretary, Mr. Malcolm Bird, at his behest. Mr. Bird, it may be remarked, with a far better brain than Houdini, and with a record of some fifty séances, had by this time been entirely convinced of the truth of the phenomena.

It may seem unkind that I should dwell upon these matters now that Houdini has gone to his account, but what I am writing now I also wrote and published during his lifetime. I deal gently with the matter, but I have to remember that its importance far transcends any worldly consideration, and that the honour of the Crandons is still impugned in many minds by the false charges which were not only circulated in print, but were shouted by Houdini from the platforms of a score of music-halls with a violence which browbeat and overbore every protest from the friends of truth. Houdini did not yet realize the gravity of his own actions, or the consequences which they entailed. The Crandons are themselves the most patient and forgiving people in the world, treating the most irritating opposition with a good-humoured and amused tolerance. But there are other forces which are beyond human control, and from that day the shadow lay heavy upon Houdini. His anti-Spiritualist agitation became more and more unreasoning until it bordered upon a mania which could only be explained in some quarters by supposing that he was in the pay of certain clerical fanatics. It is true that in order to preserve some show of reason he proclaimed that he wished only to attack dishonest mediums, but as in the same breath he would assert that there were no honest ones, his moderation was more apparent than real. If he had consulted the reports of the National Association of American Spiritualists he would have found that this representative body was far more efficient in exposing those swindlers than he had ever been, for they had the necessary experience by which the true can be separated from the false.

I suppose that at that time Houdini was,

from an insurance point of view, so far as bodily health goes, the best life of his age in America. He was in constant training, and he used neither alcohol nor tobacco. Yet all over the land warnings of danger arose. He alluded in public to the matter again and again. In my own home circle I had the message a year or so ago, "Houdini is doomed, doomed, doomed!" So seriously did I take this warning that I would have written to him had I the least hope that my words could have any effect. I knew, however, by previous experience, that he always published my letters, even the most private of them, and that it would only give him a fresh pretext for ridiculing that which I regard as a sacred cause. But as the months passed and fresh warnings came from independent sources, both I and, as I believe, the Crandons became seriously alarmed for his safety. He was, on one side of his character, so fine a fellow that even those who were attacked in this monstrous way were unwilling that real harm should befall him.

But he continued to rave, and the shadow continued to thicken. I have an American friend who writes in the press under the name of Samri Frikell. He is really Fulton Oursler, the distinguished novelist, whose "Step-child of the Moon" is, in my judgment, one of the greatest of recent romances. Oursler was an intimate friend of Houdini, and he has allowed me to quote some of his experiences.

> "You know him as well as I do," writes Oursler. "You knew the immense vanity of the man. You know that he loved to be important. My experience with him for the last three months of his life was most peculiar. He would call me on the telephone at seven o'clock in the morning and he would be in quarrelsome mood. He would talk for an hour telling me how important he was and what a great career he was making. In his voice was a hysterical, almost feminine, note of rebellion, as if his hands were beating against an immutable destiny.
>
> "In all these cases Houdini portrayed to me a clear sense of impending doom. This is not an impression which I have received subsequent to his death, but I commented upon it at the time. I believe that Houdini sensed the coming of his death, but did not know that it meant death. He didn't know what it meant, but he hated it and his soul screamed out in indignation."

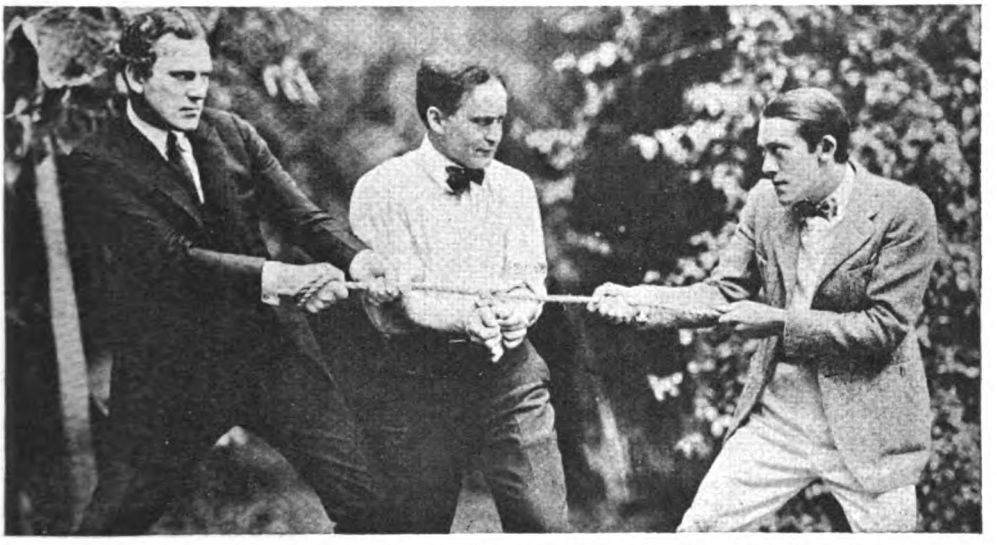
Some time later he telephoned to the same friend in a way which showed that his surmise had become more definite. "I am marked for death," said he. "I mean that they are predicting my death in spirit circles all over the country." At that time he was starting in perfect health upon that tour of the Vaudevilles which was destined to be the last of his career. Within a few weeks he was dead.

THE details of that death were in many ways most singular. On October 12th he had a painful but, as everyone thought, an unimportant accident, when during his performance a weight fell upon one of his feet. The incident was treated quite lightly by the Press, but was regarded more seriously by those who had other sources of information. On October 13th, the day after the accident, the gentleman already quoted had a letter from a medium, Mrs. Wood. "Three years ago," said this ill-omened epistle, "the spirit of Dr. Hyslop said, 'The waters are black for Houdini,' and he foretold that disaster would befall him while performing before an audience in a theatre. Dr. Hyslop now says that the injury is more serious than has been reported, and that Houdini's days as a magician are over."

The sad prophecy proved to be only too true, though the injured leg was only the prelude of worse disaster. It seemed indeed to be a sign that the protective mantle which had been around him had for some reason been withdrawn. His health wilted in a strange way, though he continued for some weeks to give his accustomed show. At Montreal a member of the audience rose to protest against the violence with which he raved against Spiritualism, and very particularly against me. Such personal attacks were not to be taken too seriously, for it was part of his perfervid nature that anyone who had experiences which differed from his own was either a dupe or a scoundrel. He bore up with great bravery against the pain from which he must have continually suffered, but in less than a fortnight, while on the stage at Detroit, he completely collapsed, and was carried to that hospital from which he never emerged alive.

THERE were some remarkable points about his death. The immediate cause would seem to have been a ruptured appendix, though how or why it was ruptured has not been disclosed. The story about a blow from a student is, I believe, apocryphal. He seems to have known that he was doomed. "I guess I am through with fighting," he said, some days before the end. Then at the last a singular thing is reported to have occurred. Robert Ingersoll, who had died thirty years before, was one of Houdini's heroes.

He was heard now to be earnestly addressing him. A dialogue, one side of which was unheard, seemed to be proceeding. It was a strange end for the great opponent of spirit intercourse. It is open to the materialist to put such dying conversations down to senseless delirium. It may in some cases be so. I can remember, however, on one such occasion, noting ten or twelve names uttered by a woman in



Houdini escaping "in full view of the audience" after his wrists have been tied tightly together by two members of the audience.

similar circumstances, and of them all there was not one the owner of which had not passed over. Had it been mere imagination, why should the dead have precedence over the living ?

Even after death strange things continued to happen which seem to be beyond the range of chance or coincidence. Some little time before Houdini had ordered a very ornate coffin, which he proposed to use in some sensational act. He paid no less than two thousand five hundred dollars for it. The idea was, I believe, to have a glass face to it and to exhibit the magician within it after it was hermetically sealed up, for he had shown in a previous experiment an inexplicable capacity for living without air. He carried this coffin about with him in one of the very numerous crates in which all his apparatus was packed. After his death all his goods were, as I am told, sent on to New York. It was found, however, that by some blunder one box had been left behind. On examination this was found to contain the show coffin, which was accordingly used for his burial. At that

burial some curious and suggestive words were used by the presiding Rabbi, Barnard Drachman. He said : " Houdini possessed a wondrous power that he never understood, and which he never revealed to anyone in life." Such an expression coming at so solemn a moment from one who may have been in a special position to know must show that my speculations are not extravagant or fantastic when I deal with the real source of those powers. The Rabbi's speech is to be taken with Houdini's own remark, when he said to my wife : " There are some of my feats which my own wife does not know the secret of." He frequently said that his work would die with him, and he has left no legacy of it so far as can be seen, though it would clearly be a very valuable asset. What can cover all these facts, save that there was some element in his power which was peculiar to himself, and that could only point to a psychic element—in a word, that he was a medium ?

In the remarkable ceremony performed beside his coffin by his brother magicians, the spokesman broke a symbolic wand and said : " The wand is broken. God touched him with a wondrous gift and our brother used it. Now the wand is broken." It may indeed have been not mere trickery but a God-given gift which raised Houdini to such a height. And why should he not use it, if it were indeed the gift of God ? I see no reason why the medium, like other God-endowed men—the painter, the poet, or the romancer—should not earn money and

renown by his gift. Let him hesitate, however, before he makes rash attacks upon those who are using the same gift, and for higher ends.

Other curious points, which may possibly come within the range of coincidence, are connected with the death of Houdini. For example, there was a Mr. Gysel, who had shared in Houdini's views as to Spiritualism. He wrote thus to my friend :—

> " Mr. Frikell,—
> " Something happened to me in my room on Sunday night, October 24th, 1926, 10.58 : Houdini had given me a picture of himself which I had framed and hung on the wall. At the above time and date the picture fell to the ground, breaking the glass. I now know that Houdini will die. Maybe there is something in these psychic phenomena after all."

To this Mr. " Frikell " adds :—

> " As I think back on my own experience I am inclined to agree maybe there is indeed something to the psychic phenomena after all."

His admission is the more noteworthy as I remember the day when he was a strong and intelligent opponent.

I WILL now turn to a consideration of the nature of Houdini's powers, and in order to appreciate the argument one has to consider the nature of some of the feats which he did actually perform. A list of these would make a considerable pamphlet, but a few typical ones may be selected. A general outline of his life, too, may not be out of place.

Houdini's real name was Eric Weiss, and he was born in 1874, in the State of Wisconsin, in one of those small towns which seem to be the real centres of American originality. He was the seventh son of a Jewish Rabbi, and he has left it on record that his mother did not even know the English language. He has also left it on record that in his early youth he had some connection with mediumship, though of a most doubtful variety. He has not scrupled to confess that he eked out any powers he may have had by the expedient of reading the names upon the graves in the local cemeteries. It was a good deal later than this that he first met a true medium in the shape of Ira Davenport, the only survivor of the famous brothers whose powers amazed all England in the 'sixties, and who, in spite of all the interested claims of Maskelyne and other conjurers, were never exposed, nor even adequately imitated. I have before me as I write a letter from Houdini himself, in which he tells me :—

> " I was an intimate friend of Ira Erastus Davenport. I can make the positive assertion that the Davenport Brothers never were exposed. I know more about the Davenports than anyone living."

He then adds the very curious and notable sentence :—

> " I know for a fact that it was not necessary for them to remove their bonds in order to obtain manifestations."

When one considers that these bonds were often handcuffs or twisted copper wire, and that the manifestations occurred in many cases within a few seconds of the closing of the cabinet, this admission by one who claims that he knows is of very great importance. We will return to this later, after we have enumerated a few of his results.

He could, and continually did, walk straight out of any prison cell in which he might be confined. They placed him at Washington in the cell in which Guiteau, the murderer of Garfield, had been locked, but he readily emerged. In the letter from which I have already quoted, he says to me :—

> " I pledge my word of honour that I was never given any assistance, nor was in collusion with anyone."

This was clearly the case, for he performed the feat many times in different places, and was always searched to prove that he had no tools in his possession. Sometimes the grinning warders had hardly got out of the passage before their prisoner was at their heels. It takes some credulity, I think, to say that this was, in the ordinary sense of the word, a trick.

Handcuffs might have been made of jelly, so easily did his limbs pass through them. He was heavily manacled at Scotland Yard, and placed behind a screen from over which a shower of manacles began to fall until he stepped out a free man. These things he could do in an instant. When I was lecturing at the Carnegie Hall in New York, my wife and Houdini walked down some side corridor after the lecture in order to rejoin me. They came to a padlocked door, and my wife was about to turn back. To her amazement, her companion put out his hand and picked off the locked padlock as one picks a plum from a tree. Was that a trick, or are all these talks about sleight of hand what Houdini himself would call " bunk " or " hokum " ?

WHEN Houdini was in Holland, he got the local basketmakers to weave a basket round him. Out of this he emerged. He was shut up later in a sealed paper bag and came out, leaving it intact. A block of ice was frozen round his body and he burst his way out. One who has attempted to bring his feats within the range of normal explanations tells us that he did this by " depressing his periphery as a prelude to dynamic expansion "—whatever that may mean. He was also buried six feet deep in California and emerged unhurt, though we are not told by what dynamic expansion the feat was achieved.

In Leeds he was coopered up in a cask by the brewers, but he was soon out. At Krupp's he defied the whole management, who constructed a special set of fetters for his behoof. They had no better luck than the others. He was put into the Siberian convict van at Moscow, but walked straight out of it. On December 2nd, 1906, he leaped from the Old Belle Isle Bridge at Detroit heavily handcuffed, and released himself under icy water, which would paralyse any man's limbs. On August 26th, 1907, he was thrown into San Francisco Bay with his hands tied behind his back and seventy-five pounds of ball and chain attached to his body. He was none the worse. He escaped from a padlocked United States mail-bag, as many a parcel has done before him. Finally, he was manacled, tied up in a box, and dropped into the East River at New York, but lived to tell the tale. Are we children, that we should be expected to believe that such things can be done by a mere knack ?

Of course, I am aware that Houdini really was a very skilful conjurer. All that could be known in that direction he knew. Thus he confused the public mind by mixing up things which were dimly within their comprehension with things which were beyond anyone's comprehension. I am aware also that there is a box trick and that there is a normal handcuff and bag trick. But these are not in the same class with Houdini's work. I will believe they are when I see one of these other gentlemen thrown in a box off London Bridge. One poor man in America actually believed these explanations, and on the strength of them jumped in a weighted packing-case into a river in the Middle West. He is there yet!

Houdini escaping after being tied to a cannon wheel.

To show the difference between Houdini's methods and those by which the box trick is done by other conjurers I will give a description of the latter by one who has all normal tricks at his finger-ends. He says :—

" While the air-holes are there for ventilation they are there for another purpose, and that is that the man inside may get a catch or grip of that particular board. The first thing that is done by the man inside is to put his back up against the side next the audience and with his feet force off the board with the air-holes in it. After freeing this board with a bit of string he lowers this board to the floor. If any obstruction comes in the way in the shape of a nail which he cannot force with his concealed lever and hammer, he cuts the nail with a fine saw. Thus his escape. The ropes are only a blind, as quite sufficient room can be got to get out between ropes. The procedure to close up again is simple. The iron nails are placed back upon the holes from which they were forced and squeezed in and knocked with a leather-covered hammer."

Such is the usual technique as described by an expert. Does anyone believe that all this could be done as I have seen Houdini do it in a little over a minute, or could one imagine it being carried out at the bottom of a river? I contend that Houdini's performance was on an utterly different plane.

I will now take a single case of Houdini's powers, and of the sort of thing that he would say, in order to show the reader what he is up against if he means to maintain that these tricks had no abnormal element. The description is by my friend, Captain Bartlett, himself a man of many accomplishments, psychic and otherwise. In the course of their conversation he said to his guest :—

" ' How about your box trick ? '

" Instantly his expression changed. The sparkle left his eyes and his face looked drawn and haggard. ' I cannot tell you,' he said, in a low, tense voice. ' I don't know myself, and, what is more, I have always a dread lest I should fail, and then I would not live. I have promised Mrs. Houdini to give up the box trick at the end of the season, for she makes herself ill with anxiety, and for myself I shall be relieved too.'

" He stooped to stroke our cats, and to our amazement they fled from the room with their tails in the air, and for some minutes they dashed wildly up and down stairs, scattering the mats in all directions.

" After this we had an earnest talk on psychic phenomena, and he told me of strange happenings to himself, especially at the grave of his mother, to whom he was deeply attached.

" The trunk-makers of Bristol had made a challenge box from which he was billed to escape that evening. He begged me to be with him, explaining that he liked the support of a sensitive, more especially as he was feeling anxious.

" I willingly agreed, the more especially as he allowed me to bring a very observant friend, a civil engineer of repute.

" The box was made of inch planking, tongued and grooved, with double thickness at the ends. It was nailed herring-bone fashion, three-inch nails, three inches apart. Several auger holes were made at one end to admit air, and the whole thing was carefully and solidly finished. It was, as I have said, a challenge box, yet we thoroughly overhauled it and were satisfied that it contained no tricks.

" Houdini lay down in it, while the challengers climbed to the platform and nailed down the heavy top again, using three-inch nails as before. The box was then tightly roped, three men pulling on the cords. Meanwhile, Houdini inside the box called out that it was very hot, and, putting a finger through an air-hole, waggled it furiously.

" The box was then enclosed by a tent consisting of brass rods covered by a silken canopy.

" In ninety-five seconds Houdini was standing before his audience, breathless, and with his shirt in tatters. The box-makers, after careful examination, in which we joined, declared that both box and roping were intact.

" Now, was Houdini's statement that he never knew how he got out of the box a mere blind, or did he employ supernormal forces and dematerialize ? If I put a beetle in a bottle, hermetically sealed, and that beetle makes its escape, I, being only an ordinary human, and not a magician, can only conclude that either the beetle has broken the laws of matter, or that it possesses secrets that I should call supernormal."

I WOULD also ask the reader to consider the following account by Mr. Hewat Mackenzie, one of the most experienced psychical researchers in the world. In his book, " Spirit Intercourse " (p. 86), he says :—

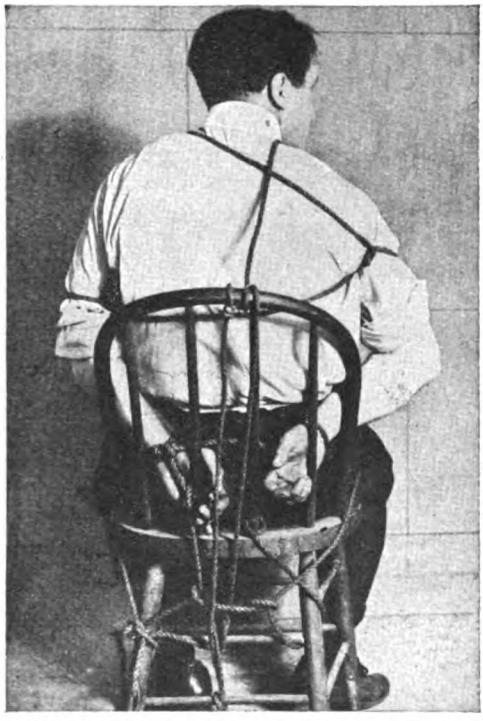
" A small iron tank filled with water was deposited on the stage, and in it Houdini was placed, the water completely covering his body. Over this was placed an iron lid with three hasps and staples, and these were securely locked. The body was then completely dematerialized within this tank in one and a half minutes, while the author stood immediately over it. Without disturbing any of the locks Houdini was transferred from the tank direct to the back of the stage in a dematerialized state. He was there materialized and returned to the stage front dripping with water and attired in the blue jersey-suit in which he entered the tank. From the time that he entered it to the time that he came to the front only one and a half minutes had elapsed.

" While the author stood near the tank during the dematerialization process a great loss of physical energy was felt by him, such as is usually felt by sitters in materializing séances who have a good stock of vital energy, as in such phenomena a large amount of energy is required. . . This startling manifestation of one of Nature's profoundest miracles was probably regarded by most of the audience as a very clever trick."

In other words, the audience was successfully bluffed by the commercialization of psychic power. It is remarkable and most suggestive that in this case, as in the Bristol one already given, Houdini was anxious that some psychic from whom he could draw strength should stand near him.

Can any reasonable man read such an account as this and then dismiss my theory as fantastic? It seems to me that the phantasy lies in accepting any other explanation.

A point which is worth considering is, that even if we grant that enormous practice and natural advantages might conceivably give a man a facility in one direction which might appear preternatural, these feats of Houdini cover a larger range than could be accounted for by any one aptitude. This consideration becomes stronger still when one sees that his powers really covered the whole field of what we usually associate with physical mediumship in its strongest form, and can be covered so far as I can see by no other explanation whatever.



Houdini escaping when tied to a chair.

Thus, he gave himself the following account of an interview with ex-President Roosevelt :—

"I had a slate with the usual covering. Roosevelt wanted to know if the spirits could tell him where he had spent Christmas Day. In a few moments I had brought forth a map done in many colours of chalk, which indicated where he had been on the famous river of Doubt. That map was one which was the exact duplicate of one that was to appear in his book which had not yet been published. I had never seen the map."

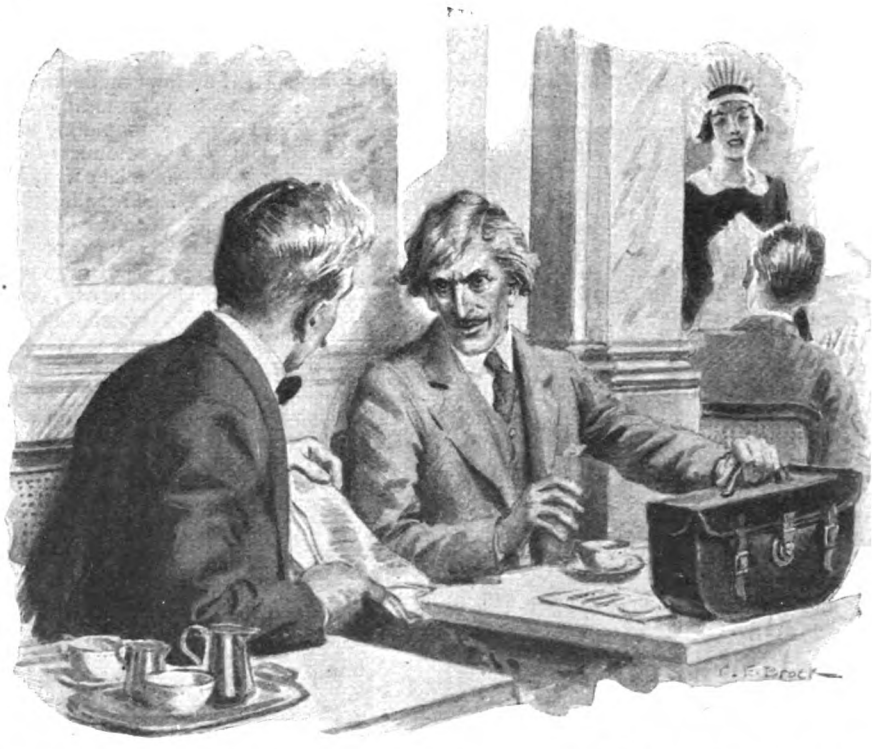
One would hardly associate this with an ordinary conjurer's trick. Again, a friend reports :—

"One day a sceptic called upon him. Houdini read the man's hand, prognosticated his future, and pronounced his past from a mere reading of his face, having only been told the day of his birth. This was done with an accuracy and vividness which astonished the subject."

This sounds like possible clairvoyance, but is hardly in the repertoire of the conjurer.

Now, having considered Houdini's inexplicable powers, let us turn to his direct relations with Spiritualism.

(To be concluded next month.)



THE CORNET-PLAYER

By

ARNOLD BENNETT

Illustrated by
C. E. BROCK, R.I.

I.

I SAT in the Palais de Thé—the most characteristic London inn of the epoch. Six floors; marble everywhere; two thousand *employés*, mostly girls; three orchestras and several vocalists; the finest, richest barber's saloon in the whole world; cakes and ribboned chocolates and other sweets on the ground floor; tea with operatic selections on the first floor; tea with orchestral selections on the second floor; tea unaccompanied on the third floor and the fourth floor and the fifth floor; lifts always ascending and descending; entering multitudes and departing multitudes always jostling each other in the grand entrance and bon-bon hall; not a drop of beer in the entire establishment. I was in a corner on the fifth floor, which is dedicated to chess, draughts, newspapers, and meditation.

The enormous, quiet room was very full; that is to say, nearly every marble table was taken, though at many tables only one person was seated; all the solitaries, of whom I was one, were men, in various ages of youth or maturity, prosperity or decay, cheerfulness or gloom.

Over the top edge of my newspaper I saw a little man enter and look round rather vaguely for a seat. At the same instant

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the occupant of the table next to mine shut his book, snatched up his check, and left. The new arrival, who was carrying a leather case, took his place by my side. He appeared to be about fifty. We had our backs to the gilded wall, and the distance between us was not more than a couple of feet.

Dressed in a worn grey suit, with neat collar and grey tie, he had abundant greying brown hair, a sharp, refined nose, restless eyes, thin lips, and a chin that indicated both obstinacy and sensitiveness. Because the haughty tripping waitress did not rush at him instantly to receive his order, he tapped impatiently on the table; when she came, however, he asked for a black coffee and hot toast in tones of marked urbanity and with a very agreeable, wistful smile. The haughty waitress relaxed the austerity of her demeanour and returned the smile with interest; which attention he seemed to take quite as a matter of course; evidently he was well used to the unbending of waitresses.

In the street below a cornet began to play. The strident sound of it rose clearly into the room, stilling, as it were, the traffic-roar of the centre of the Metropolis. The tune was "The Lost Chord." Now and then a note trembled in uncertainty, and now and then the intonation was noticeably faulty. My neighbour was soon fidgeting on his chair, and making little noises of protest between his teeth. He scattered salt savagely on his toast, blew his coffee as though it had wilfully sinned against him in being too hot, and glanced once or twice at myself. I felt that he wanted to relieve his pain by speech, and so I slowly folded up my paper.

He said, smiling his sudden, wistful smile:—

"That fellow hasn't a notion how to play the cornet."

"I should think not," I replied. "But has anybody? I never yet heard a cornet that didn't make me curse the criminal who invented cornets."

I had thought to soothe him, but I immediately saw that I was going the wrong way to work.

"My dear sir! My dear sir!" he corrected me, in a manner of intimacy. "The cornet is a very fine instrument. Perhaps the finest of all instruments. And let me tell you that it was not invented—it has slowly grown out of the old horns—in the course of two or three centuries. The latest form of it is as perfect as anything can be, but that fellow is using an old-fashioned *C* instrument—and, moreover, he is merely fumbling at it. You see——" The man's face had become animated; but he suddenly stopped, and; speaking coldly, almost disdainfully, he demanded: "Do you understand music?"

"Well——"

"Because if you don't it's no good me explaining to you."

"I play the piano—for my own amusement," I said, apologetically.

"Pooh! *I* play the piano. Everybody plays the piano. That's nothing. Still, it's something, perhaps. You see—the cornet stands before the trumpet and the bugle: it has the qualities of both. It has a vocal quality—if it's played right. Only it's nearly always vulgarized. Listen to that fellow. See how he's altering the tune because he can't fetch the top notes. I tell you there isn't a cornet-player in a hundred who can fetch the four top notes, *d*, *e*, *f*, and *g*, of the cornet. I'll tell you. Now listen."

He went off into a technical description of the marvels of the cornet and the unrighteousness of incompetent players, and talked about shanks and crooks and valves, and transpositions and minor thirds. He was now excited, and very pleasantly excited; he even managed to communicate some of his enthusiasm to me. His eager, sharp-featured face shone with joy as he chattered onwards farther and farther into his theme.

"Of course, the greatest composers used the cornet freely. Balfe, for instance. Balfe was a great composer. You've heard 'The Bohemian Girl.' Great work, but not appreciated because it's British." (I had never heard "The Bohemian Girl.") "'When other lips.' Do you remember the wonderful part for a cornet in that immortal song? Berlioz was always using the cornet. So was Tchaikovsky."

"Really!" I exclaimed; for this was news to me, despite a long experience as a concert-goer.

"Well, naturally!" he exploded, crossly. "Naturally!"

Then his face became contorted as if in agony. The cornet-player in the street below was approaching the climax of "The Lost Chord," and the raucous, brassy din of the outrage was hideous and excruciating. The cornet-player ceased. My acquaintance's face relaxed; he wiped perspiration from his forehead, and bit a piece of toast and drank coffee.

"My God!" he murmured. "If he begins again—— And to think what it might have been! Waitress!" Raps on the table, and then a sweet smile to the waitress. "Another coffee, please, my dear." His fingers were twitching with nervousness.

"You love the cornet?" I suggested.

He nodded.

"You play it?"

"I have lived for it."

"That's a cornet you've got there, isn't

it ? " I indicated the leather case on the table.

He opened the case with a dramatic gesture. It was empty. I was rather startled by his burning glance.

" What a pity ! " I murmured, not being able to think of anything else to say. Somehow the revelation of the emptiness of the case seemed to shock me. " And how came you first to be so keen on the cornet ? " I asked.

" Ah ! " said he. " That's a long story."

" I should be very interested to hear it," said I. And I spoke truly. In my mind the man had transformed the cornet from an instrument of barbarous torture into something distinguished and fine, thrilling—something with intensely human associations.

II.

" OF course," he said. " It wasn't until after I'd been playing the cornet for a bit——"

" But the beginning ? " I interrupted him. " The beginning. How came you to begin ? "

" Well, you see, sir, it was like this. I lived in the country with my father—mother dead. I'd just left school, and we were discussing, my father and I, what I was to do with myself in the world. I don't think we ever agreed about anything. He was always very quiet and polite over it, but we couldn't hit it off. He had to go up to London—somewhere—about something, and I was left alone for the day, without a thing to do. I walked into the village—a mile or two—to buy my first cigarettes openly—I was sixteen or seventeen, probably seventeen—yes, seventeen ; and there came a big gilt wagonette through the village, drawn by four white horses. There was a brass band in the wagonette, but only one man was playing ; he was standing up and playing a cornet. I didn't know it was a cornet. I'd never seen a cornet before, much less heard one. You see, living right out on the South Downs—it isn't like the North of England, where every village has cornet-players and brass bands. Well, I tell you I'd never had such a feeling as I had when I heard that cornet. Something so rich and big and grand about it—shall I say golden ? No, I've never had such a feeling."

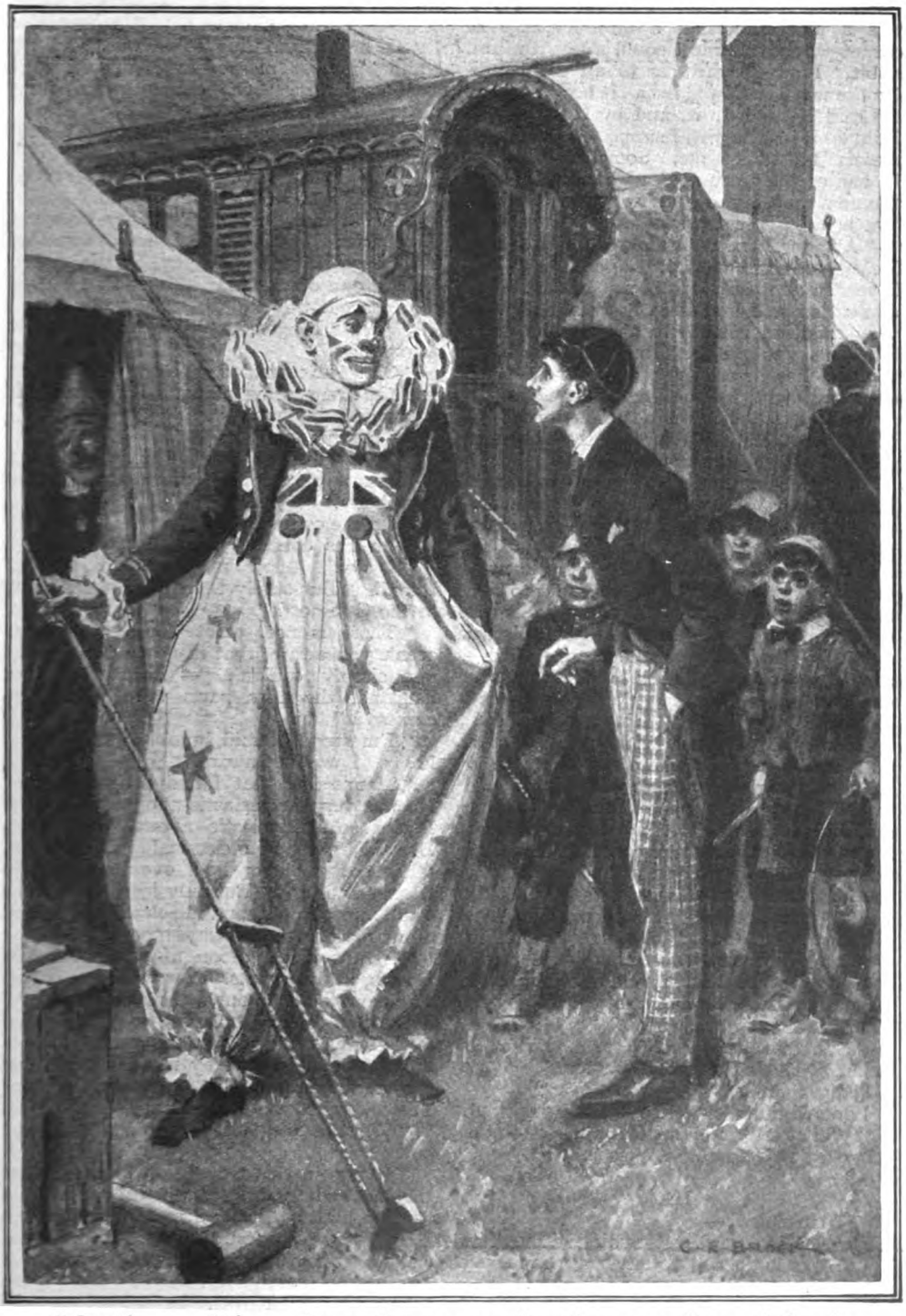
His eyes were moist.

" A revelation ! " I suggested, moved by his demeanour.

" Yes. I ran after the wagonette three miles—into Lewes. It was a circus band, and they were making a round of the villages to advertise the show. I expect I didn't know quite what I was doing. Instinct. This was in the afternoon, and the performance didn't begin till seven o'clock. I hung about. D'you know, I'd never seen a circus before. It was all terribly romantic to me—all of a piece with the cornet. The big tent and the little tents—stables, dressing-rooms—and the caravans. The canvas roof lifting up and down in the wind, and the flag on the top. And then when it began to get dark ! The lighting up ! They had gas in those days—I suppose it was laid on from the town mains. Outside one of the small tents I saw a man dressed up as a clown. I thought I recognized him, so I asked him if he wasn't the man who played the cornet in the wagonette. He said he was. He looked at me with a queer sort of a look, because you see I was well-dressed. I asked him if he was going to play it at the performance. He said he was. I got a front seat near the ring. I wanted to be as close to him as I could. And he did play it. Well, I tell you I thought he was the greatest man in the world. And he *did* play it. Of course he wasn't really a great performer, but I didn't know any better then.

" In the interval, when the audience went to visit the stables, I saw him standing with the cornet in his hand. I was very frightened, with all the people there and him making jokes with the people ; but I just had to speak to him again. I said : ' My word, mister, but you can play ! ' And all of a sudden he looked quite serious at me. He saw my eyes fixed on the cornet, and he said, ' Like to look at it ? ' You see, he was a bit flattered. He gave me the cornet to hold. I pretended to put it to my mouth. He said, ' You couldn't make a sound on it, young sir.' So I tried. I'd watched how he held his lips, and I did make a sound, very loud indeed. The whole crowd turned to see what was up and laughed like anything. I blushed, and gave him back the cornet and ran off back into the big tent for the rest of the performance.

But he didn't play the cornet any more. He did a trapeze act in the second half. When I got home my father hadn't come. I couldn't sleep all night, and the next morning, as soon as it was light, I set off for Lewes again. I couldn't tell you what made me. I'd three pounds in my pocket—burst open my money-box. The circus people were taking the tents down and packing up and feeding the horses and so on. They were all helping. Everybody did everything in that circus. It was the finest thing I was ever in, and the most exciting. Early morning, you know, and all ! And they were all so jolly. I made friends with the cornet-player—I couldn't tell you how.



"Outside one of the small tents I saw a man dressed up as a clown. I thought I recognized him, so I asked him if he wasn't the man who played the cornet in the wagonette."

"I followed the circus to Brighton. It was a procession half a mile long. The cornet-player told me I could ride with him a bit. I gave cigarettes to all the band. On the way he showed me a bit how to play. He said I could do it, and by Heaven, sir, I did do it! The gift, I suppose. The ring-master talked to me. Somehow I slept in one of the tents that night, and helped the next morning to pack up, and I followed 'em again to Southwick—no, Shoreham.

"At Shoreham my father came after me. He'd guessed what had happened. Well, I wouldn't go back with him. I knew I had a vocation, and I couldn't leave it. He was very mild, as usual. In the end he said, 'Just as you please, Jimmy. You know where I live in case you come to grief. I dare say you'll be strolling along in about a fortnight. And it's all experience.' I must say he had some sense—in some things. But he was cynical.

"I was soon playing in the orchestra. But not the cornet. No. The drummer went off on a drinking bout, so I offered to play the drum. But I was practising on the cornet all the time. The cornet-player—he was called Jeroboam—he seemed to like teaching me. It was a glorious life, even when it rained, was Radlett's Royal Circus.

"I got spoony on the Snake Girl—couldn't she twist herself! There was a goodish bit of the tender passion around Radlett's. Oh, yes!" His eyes twinkled. "One morning I serenaded her on the cornet outside the caravan where she slept. And there was a devil of a row about it. I'd waked her up. Still, she liked me, but she said she wouldn't have anything to do with me unless I gave up the cornet. It wasn't the sound she objected to so much as shaking the moisture out of the instrument after you've been playing it a bit. Said she couldn't stand that. Of course I wouldn't give up the cornet, especially as I'd begun to buy one on the hire-purchase system. After that I felt I was a real cornet-player. That was how I began, sir."

"But that's not all," I said, eager for more. "There must be a lot more."

"Oh, there is!"

I offered him a cigarette, which he refused.

"Waitress!" Reiterated rap. A smile. "Packet of Gold Flake, please."

III.

HE resumed:—

"The most astounding thing that ever happened to any man happened to me. Yes, *the* most astounding! By the way, I ought to mention that I left that circus. Had to. The Snake Girl made life too hard for me. But when you have been in one circus it's not very difficult to get into another one. In the next one I was billed as a solo cornet-player. About a year later I got a letter from August Manns. August Manns, if you please—asking me to go and see him. Of course you don't remember him?"

"You mean the Crystal Palace orchestral conductor?"

"The great conductor," he said, gravely.

"A big man in his time," I said.

"A big man for all time, my dear sir. Some friend of his had actually persuaded him to go and hear me play in the circus I got a day off and saw him, and he offered me a place in the Crystal Palace orchestra!"

"Well," I agreed, "that was certainly astounding."

"Oh!" he corrected me sharply. "That's not the astounding thing. I see nothing astounding in that."

"I beg pardon."

"I played in the Crystal Palace orchestra. Yes, sir, I played in Beethoven's C minor symphony."

"On the cornet?"

"On the cornet."

"I don't know much about music," I said. "But surely there's no cornet part in the C minor?"

"There is not. But don't you know, aren't you aware, that in those days, when you simply couldn't get horn-players in England, the horn parts were played by cornets?"

"I'm sorry," I said, humbly. "I did not know. I was not aware."

"Manns saw that I had proper lessons. He was very enthusiastic about me because I was so enthusiastic about the cornet. He said I had a finer classical style than any other cornet-player he'd ever heard. So I had—and have. But only men like Manns could appreciate it, and the classical sobriety of my performances always stood in my way.

"Manns died. Soon afterwards I was playing in the streets. Row with my father. The mere fact is enough. I need not go into details. Yes, I was playing in the streets. Me! I was being paid to move on. I made quite a decent living by moving on." He stared at me proudly, quivering. "Me! The *protégé* of the great Manns."

"What a disgusting shame!" I burst out.

"It was in this moving on business that the astounding thing happened to me. I used to play in Sloane Street, near the top. Best place in London. Full of rich shoppers, women with overfed pet dogs and so on. I was always moving on there. Mind you, I had no trouble with the police, because I'd taken the trouble to find out what the police could do and what they could not do. You know the police can't move you

on far, and they can't move you on at all unless there's a personal complaint from a resident. If you want to give a first-rate performance in the street, why shouldn't you? Lots of people enjoy it.

"Well, I'd been playing a pretty long time in front of one house one morning—I'd surpassed myself—and a man came out of a door and beckoned to me very politely. He gave me a shilling and asked me to tell him about my cornet, and he took me upstairs to the second floor—there were three floors, over a shop. As soon as I was in his rooms he wanted to examine the cornet. He was still very polite. I gave it to him, and he hit me over the head with it and began the most extraordinary tirade—how I was driving him mad, etc., etc., and how he'd do for me if he ever heard me again. Can you imagine it? The fellow was mad already. There was some tussle, and I fell downstairs from the second floor to the first; but I'd got my cornet, all dented as it was. My head was bleeding.

"Then a door opened on the first floor, and a lady came out. She heard the noises and me falling and the fellow shouting. I thought I was in for more trouble. But no! She said: 'Are you that splendid cornet-player?' And she took me and looked after me. Now, she played the cornet herself; she loved the cornet. She was a widow; about twenty-six. Her husband had gone off his head and died in a lunatic asylum. Mrs. Alicia Williams. She gave me some lemonade and showed me her cornet. It was a superb instrument. She locked the door, and as soon as I'd recovered a bit I played it for her in her drawing-room. The stamping overhead was dreadful, but I kept on playing. I had to stay there till evening—till the fellow upstairs had gone out. Daren't move till then, you see.

"Well, she liked me, and she adored my playing, and she was all alone, and she saw at once I was a gentleman—not an ordinary street-player, and I married her. We joined cornets, so to speak. Now *that's* what I say is the most astounding thing that ever did happen to any man; and you can say what you like. Ah! But I can't describe it to you."

I did not say what I liked, for if I had I should have said that he was not telling this story for the first time; I should have said indeed that he had told it many times before. He had dramatic gestures and pauses, and some of his phrases were rather effectively chosen. He was a performer not only on the cornet. However, he was holding all my attention, and he seemed to be sticking to the truth pretty well. Also I felt great sympathy for him, as surely one ought to feel sympathy for any man who is reduced to disburdening himself to strangers.

"I'm convinced you *can* describe it to me," I said.

IV.

"WELL," he took breath. "I don't suppose there ever was a courtship or a honeymoon like ours. Alicia was a bit older than me, and knew more about men than I knew about women. She saw, of course, that I was a sensitive sort of person—especially in the matter of money: she had money and I hadn't—and she always behaved with the greatest tact. She gave me a new cornet. No, she insisted on giving me hers, because I liked it so much, and she got a new one for herself. During our courtship we used to go out into Epping Forest and play together, all among the trees and far from anybody, except a gipsy or two now and then. It was wonderful, really wonderful. I can never forget those days. And after the wedding we took a small house in the forest; very small, we didn't want to be bothered with servants; but soon we got a deaf woman for a skivvy; and when I played in her ear she'd say she thought she could hear something but wasn't sure. Of course, we couldn't talk to her; we had to write down our orders. Still, it was very convenient.

"And then my one trouble was removed. My father died and I came into between four and five hundred a year. It was all ideal. Yes, ideal! My wife played very nicely. She didn't play as well as me, no woman could—and jolly few men either. But she played with taste; and she was willing to learn. You couldn't guess what happened next."

"No. I doubt if I could."

"It happened what happens to all artistes. We both wanted to show our powers to the public, to give pleasure to others by means of our art. Naturally! We got tired of playing always to ourselves. We tried to get openings at concerts. But there was nothing doing. The notion of duets—two cornets—seemed to frighten the concert agents. I could have had situations in bands. But no conductor would look at a woman cornet-player, and I wouldn't go without my wife. So it came to music-halls—especially provincial music-halls. Circuits. We did several tours, and in between tours we would go back to our little house and enjoy ourselves. Yes, it was a nice, varied life. And then the next thing happened. I say the next thing happened."

"Yes?"

"Ah!" he mused. "What an idyll those years were! Nothing like it before, and there'll never be anything like it again

—not in this world, nor in kingdom come either."

"And then?"

"Ah! Waitress! Another coffee, please, my dear." And to me: "I suppose I may as well finish the story now I've begun it. Eh?"

"Well, I had played my last cornet solo. I took the instrument and threw it into a pond—drowned it, drowned it!"

As it was obvious he fully intended to finish the story, I merely nodded.

"One night, when my wife made rather a mess of a duet with me on the stage of a music-hall at Reading, I noticed in our dressing-room that her lips were quite blue after she had taken the paint off. I thought I knew what that meant, and I was not wrong. I insisted on her going to London with me early the next morning. A doctor in Queen Anne Street immediately forbade her to play the cornet any more. Heart trouble! You see, the strain of cornet-playing is rather severe. Singers whose hearts go wrong have to give up singing. Much more a cornet-player. I got the doctor to telegraph her certificate of illness to Reading, and my wife never played again. Neither did I ever play again—in public. It was a frightful blow to both of us. She was still young, still beautiful, and we had been making a name, in spite of my deplorable classical style." He smiled sardonically. "But we were very fond of one another—excuse these details, my dear sir—and managed to be very happy in our house in Epping Forest. Our thoughts, and hers especially, turned in other directions—another direction. She loved me to play

for her, and even in the winter we would go out together nearly every day—except Sundays—and I would play in the glades.

"In the spring my wife, if you'll pardon the old-fashioned phrase, presented me with twins. Generous! Generous! Yes, she always had a generous mind. Her sister, who was a nurse by profession, and almost as generous as Alicia, came to take charge of the nursery. I began to play my cornet for the twins. But somehow it didn't seem to suit them. In fact, the sound of the cornet seemed to send the pair of them straight into hysterics.

"I hoped they would get over this curious aberration of natural taste. But no! The effect was always the same. The mere sight of the cornet upset them. I persevered, but there was no improvement. At last my sister-in-law told me that if I didn't stop playing the cornet in the house she would have to leave, as she couldn't take the responsibility. She was a charming girl, and she cried when she gave me her decision. Alicia also cried.

"I went out into the forest and played by myself; but I had to walk at least a mile to get out of earshot of the house, and, anyhow, I didn't like playing by myself. Like all artistes, I needed an audience if I was to obtain any satisfaction. As soon as my wife's health was thoroughly re-established she would go out with me to listen. It was summer; the weather was heavenly. I was happy, and I thought she was. My playing had even improved. But one day her nerves appeared to give way suddenly. She burst into terrible sobs and without a word snatched the cornet from me and threw it into some bushes. She shouted: 'I can't bear it! I can't bear it any longer!' Motherhood had quite changed her.

"I discovered afterwards that motherhood does sometimes change women in the most extraordinary manner. I picked my cornet out of the bushes and we walked home in silence, except that my wife never ceased sobbing. When we reached the house she ran to the babies, seized hold of both of them, and walked up and down the bedroom with them in her arms, still sobbing. An awful scene! I shall always remember it.

"Well, I had played my last cornet solo. I took the instrument and threw it into a pond—drowned it, drowned it!" His eyes shone with emotion. "We've been happy. What man could be unhappy with a woman like my wife? Not me! We have had more children. We took a larger house in the village of Epping—some of 'em call it a town. We have money. I am a family man. No, I couldn't honestly say I'm unhappy. And yet—yet——!

"Now and then I go and look at the pond. I expect I couldn't play a cornet now if I tried. It's all gone from me. Now and then I have to come to London on little matters of business, and when I do I always carry this case. I don't know why. Yes, I do know why. It's because I like musicians to know I'm a cornet-player—or was one once." He shut the case. "Now did you ever hear such a story? Isn't it different from any other story you ever heard?"

"It is indeed," I replied. "And I'm very grateful to you for telling it to me."

"I thought you'd be interested," he said, with naive pride. "Waitress, my check, please. I'm in a hurry."

He looked at his watch.

ACROSTICS.

OUR thirty-sixth series of acrostics begins with No. 169, printed below, and will run for four months. Prizes to the value of twelve guineas will be awarded to the most successful solvers.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 169.

WHERE shall we go for holidays?
Where can we bask in the sun and laze?
Well, if the seaside calls to you,
In Kent there is *one*, in Sussex *two*.

1. Gleaning for corn a widow went.
2. Six letters spell a continent.
3. A maiden, good as any mile.
4. A snaky creature, full of guile.
5. A guide will half a guinea show.
6. An English stream, the bard we know.
7. A rhyme for brig, it grows on tree.
8. A rhyme for prize, with them you see.

REMUS.

Answers to Acrostic No. 169 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on August 11th. They must be written on half-sheets of notepaper, or on cards; at the foot of the solution must appear the solver's pseudonym, which must consist of one word only. Nothing else must be written on the same paper. Flimsy paper should not be used.*

To every light one alternative answer may be sent, provided that it is written at the side.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 168.

1. T	uffe	T
2. W	oodro	W
3. E	cemb	E
4. Edmondstoun		E
5. D	otar	D
6. L	itera	L
7. E	di	E
8. D	iscor	D
9. U	rg	E
10. M	ontagu	E

NOTES.—Light 1. Miss Muffet. 2. Row, wood, President Wilson. 3. March used to be the first month of the year; March and December, beheaded and curtailed; arc. 4. Aytoun, Sheriff of Orkney in 1852. 7. Ochil Hills. Edie Ochiltree, the beggar; Scott, The Antiquary. 8. D, five hundred, is C, one hundred, or D, five hundred. Concord, town of Massachusetts, in the county of Middlesex. 9. Spur, urge, verb; sturgeon, the royal fish; Demiurge. 10. Augustus Montague Toplady.

The Girl Who Was Proud

By

J. J. BELL

Illustrated by
STANLEY LLOYD

NORMAN LESLIE, alone in a private room of his lawyer's office, was taking out his watch for the fourth time when, his frown fading, he turned eagerly to the door. But the man who entered was not the man he had expected, though Norman knew him slightly as the junior member, by name Bale, of the old firm.

"Sorry you have been kept waiting, Mr. Leslie," Mr. Bale said, shaking hands, and seated himself at the desk; "and I have just had a 'phone message from my partner, Mr. Marlowe, to say that, after all, the doctor will not allow him to come to town to-day. Mr. Marlowe has, however, informed me of your business, and I have here a letter——"

"From Mr. Vernal?"

"From Mr. Vernal, Mr. Leslie—but I'm afraid——"

"He refuses!" The look of expectation on the young man's countenance dissolved into one of dismay.

Mr. Bale bowed and passed over the letter.

Again frowning, Norman drew out a single sheet of notepaper, also a cheque. The cheque, which was for the comfortable sum of thirty thousand pounds, was signed by himself. Thrusting it into his jacket pocket, he proceeded to read the letter.

The junior partner, who might have been called young in the sense that he was not old—there are no middle-aged people nowadays—watched the client in rather a covert fashion, with a somewhat contemptuous curve on his lips, while his fingers toyed nervously with a pen. It seemed to Mr. Bale then that the world's two biggest fools were represented by the man reading the letter and the man who had written it. And one may better comprehend his feelings if one be told that by means of half the sum of money written on the cheque Mr. Bale could then and there have escaped out of hell.

The letter, dated from Cairnryan, N.B., was quite brief, and undeniably to the point, but Norman re-read it several times, as one seeking a cleft of escape from its finality.

"Mr. Charles King Vernal presents compliments to Mr. Adam Marlowe, and desires that his thanks be conveyed to Mr. Norman Leslie, whose cheque is returned herewith."

Handing letter and envelope back to the

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lawyer, Norman ruefully remarked: "He didn't even trouble to write it himself. That's a woman's hand, don't you think, Mr. Bale?"

"I should say so. There's a daughter, is there not?"

"Yes." The young man looked more depressed than ever.

"You know her?"

"I have met her on a good many occasions. I have never met her father. It strikes me," said Norman, slowly, "I've blundered. I ought to have gone myself to Mr. Vernal instead of getting Mr. Marlowe to write. Don't you agree?"

"I can't see, since you don't know the man, that it would have made much difference. Anyway"—Mr. Bale smiled ironically—"I should not worry, if I were you. You have satisfied your conscience—I assume that it was your conscience—and saved this money, which, I understand, represents one half of your fortune."

Norman resented, though he could hardly have told why, the other's tone.

"You are probably not aware, Mr. Bale," he said, "of all the circumstances."

MR. BALE offered his cigarette-case, saying: "I know only what my partner has told me. You were secretary to Professor Paul Vernal, who died a few months ago. Professor Vernal was brother to Mr. Charles Vernal, retired shipping agent, but the two had had some quarrel, and the Professor left everything to you. The thing seems to have struck you as—well, extraordinary, whereas it happens every other day. On a quixotic impulse, as soon as you received the legacy, you realized a mass of investments, banked the proceeds, and instructed my partner to send your cheque for thirty thousand pounds to Mr. Charles Vernal. Extremely admirable, of course, but——" Mr. Bale left the qualifying clause to the imagination and took a cigarette.

"You miss the point that seemed to me most important," said Norman, a trifle warmly. "Mr. Charles Vernal, compelled by ill-health to give up his business, is none too well off. For all I know, it is for economy's, as well as health's, sake that he is living in that quiet little place on Loch Ryan. The idea of myself, with my life before me, having all that money fall on me, when it would have meant so much to Vernal—why, any fellow in my position would have felt mighty uncomfortable! Confound the man's idiotic pride!"

"I should certainly call it a symptom of insanity," observed the junior partner. "Still, I congratulate you, and no doubt the day will come when you will congratulate yourself. Money becomes more useful as one grows older; sentiment becomes less urgent. As for this letter, it closes the matter, though, of course, I shall formally, on Mr. Marlowe's behalf, acknowledge it and its contents. And as for the rejected money"—Mr. Bale, with a thin smile, was apparently admiring a smoke spiral—"I shall be happy, if you will allow me, to suggest a more practical investment."

"Much obliged, and I sha'n't forget your offer, but"—Norman sat up—"I'm not going to admit myself beaten just yet, though I sha'n't trouble Mr. Marlowe, or yourself, further in the business. I shall go and have it out with Mr. Vernal, and I shall go at the earliest possible moment."

Mr. Bale's smile faded out. "Well," he said, slowly, "I wish you the success I cannot foresee. Seems to me that a man of this Mr. Vernal's make-up, having rejected the formal offer, would simply resent the other sort."

"I've got to try, anyway. I'll insist on his accepting the cheque."

"By all means! Still, as you have seen, you can give a man a cheque, but you can't make him take it to the bank."

"Then I sha'n't offer him the cheque. I shall offer him the money—Bank of England notes."

The junior partner stared; then his gaze dropped and he gave a short laugh.

"I see! You're by way of being something of a psychologist, Mr. Leslie."

Norman's smile was accompanied by a slight rise of colour. "You gave me the idea, Mr. Bale—unintentionally, of course. It does seem a bit mean, but I've got to right a big wrong, if I possibly can, and to a man not too well off and in poor health there must be a certain temptation in a bunch of bank-notes which does not appear in a cheque. Don't you think so?"

Mr. Bale had inadvertently broken his cigarette on the tray. He took another, but did not light it. There was an oddly startled look in his eyes and, though the atmosphere of the office was not particularly warm, a slight moisture on his brow.

"Why, yes," he said at last; "I suppose there's something in what you say. Indeed, few of us are wholly unaffected by the sight of a bunch of Bank of England notes. But"—as if the idea had just occurred—"you're not telling me, Mr. Leslie, that you propose to travel North with a bunch worth thirty thousand pounds in your pocket!"

"Why not? What's the difference between a bunch of thirty and a bunch of thirty thousand? I sha'n't label myself as the carrier of either."

"There is no difference till you are robbed."

The young man looked amused. "Who's going to rob me?"

The lawyer shrugged his shoulders, but his smile was slightly apologetic. "I'm afraid I'm absurdly nervous when I have to carry large sums of money, even over short distances; in fact, I hate having to carry a thousand pounds from the bank across the street, though, I suppose, the chance of disaster is one in millions."

"I must risk the chance." Norman got up. "Sorry to have wasted so much of your time. If you like, I'll send you a wire as soon as I have delivered the goods, acceptably, I hope, at Cairnryan. I should be there some time in the evening after to-morrow, so you should know my luck on Friday morning."

"You will travel by day?"

"Not altogether. I'm not going to Cairnryan direct. To-night I'm going to Dublin——"

"Dublin! But not with the money on you!"

"My brother is being married in Dublin to-morrow. I shall have the company of several friends on the journey. Then, next day, it's a mild trip by Belfast and Larne to Stranraer, which is not many miles by road from Cairnryan. So——"

Mr. Bale, who had risen also, shook his head. "I couldn't do it! I'd want a couple of detectives with me; and even then ——! Well, don't advertise your wealth by carrying it in 'fivers,' though six thousand of them would certainly make a tempting bunch!"

Norman laughed. "I think I shall take it in 'hundreds.' Larger notes would make too poor a show! And I don't imagine that your robber would welcome 'hundreds.' Too difficult to dispose of, don't you think?"

"Oh, quite—quite so," answered Mr. Bale, as one thinking of other things. He pressed a button on the desk and cleared his throat. "I shall be relieved to have your wire on Friday, Mr. Leslie," he said, holding out his hand.

For a long minute after the door had closed on the client he stood there motionless, his face ghastly and moist. Then, unsteadily, he sought his chair at the desk and sat weakly down, cramming his palms to his eyes, as though to shut out the ruin which drew nearer and nearer, and also, perhaps, the possible means, so suddenly and unexpectedly suggested, of averting it.

"The d——d young fool," he muttered at last; "it would not hurt him to lose the money! He wants to lose it!"

A crime! Yes, but a crime that once committed would blot out those years of dishonesty, and cover for ever those follies which financial collapse was certain to expose.

Came a tap on the door. Starting, he called hoarsely: "In five minutes. I'm busy."

Five minutes! Why, every minute was precious now. He must decide—act!

Presently he wiped his face and took the receiver from the telephone.

HALF an hour later he was being driven across London. At noon he was sitting in a bedroom of a second-rate hotel, in the company of two men, one of about his own age, the other considerably younger. These men were not criminals; at least, they had never been in the hands of the police. They would have described themselves as sportsmen, meaning that they were well-dressed gamblers. They knew certain secrets of Mr. Bale's, as Mr. Bale knew certain secrets of theirs. Like Mr. Bale, they were then in what they would have termed "a tight place." Because of their own secrets Mr. Bale believed he could trust them to keep another secret of his and to deal straightly with him. Still, he had to learn whether they had the will and courage to act in the open, while he remained in the shadow.

But thirty thousand pounds, as he had remarked earlier in the day, is a comfortable sum. Even fifteen thousand pounds, to be divided between two persons of dubious yet not plebeian tastes, who for some months have been, as it were, on low diet, has its attractions. And before very long Mr. Bale made the discovery that his friends were even less "particular" than he had thought them to be, and, incidentally, they made a similar discovery respecting himself.

It is to be feared that Mr. Bale's legal —and lawful—business suffered that day, for the thing took some planning, as well as the last of his ready money. Mr. Bale's somewhat sketchy design may be condensed into the following remarks, which were not, of course, uttered consecutively:—

"Your attempt must be made at the last possible moment. He is more likely to be careless towards the end than at the beginning. Besides, everything depends on his being rendered inactive for at least four days; and, without using extreme violence, that would be impossible to accomplish in any but a very quiet place, where you are likely to have the assistance of darkness. As I see it at the moment, you will have to get him at some point on his way between Stranraer and Cairnryan on Thursday night; but that will be for you to decide, after you have studied the locality. I shall probably learn to-night the name of his hotel at Stranraer; or, if it be his first visit, suggest it to him. To-night you will be on the platform for the Holyhead boat-train, and there you can memorize his looks while I apologetically but anxiously beg him to be

careful, and so forth, and discover, if possible, how and where he carries the notes. Afterwards you will take the night-train for Stranraer, but as strangers from different parts of the country. You can, if necessary, make each other's acquaintance in a conventional way at Stranraer. You will have all to-morrow and most of the next day for making your plans. It may be worth while for one of you to cross to Ireland on Friday. Coming back, you can watch Leslie, who may possibly have with him some member of the wedding party returning to London by that route; and there's always the chance that you may overhear something of his intentions for the evening. Anyway, you will see what luggage he has, not that I expect him to carry the notes in a suit-case. But, as I've already said, you can settle nothing definitely till you get to Stranraer, and I can only hope that the job will appear a little simpler there and then than it does here and now."

Mr. Bale lay back in his chair looking exhausted, as indeed he was.

"There's bound to be *some* violence," said the older man, "and that's what I don't want."

"What I do want," said the younger, "is the bank-notes. Only I don't see how we're going to negotiate them all before What's-his-name is on the job."

"I don't mind working that bit of it," said the elder, with a wry grin. "Leave it to me."

And, glancing furtively from one to the other, Mr. Bale, with a sense of sickness, realized how very low he had fallen.

DOUBTLESS the fact that Norman Leslie was a well-set-up, well-featured, and altogether debonair young man intensified Linda Vernal's resentment which had blazed up at the sudden sight of him on the *Princess Victoria*, when half-way across the Channel. At any rate, had his ill-gotten wealth, as she deemed it to be, been accompanied by an unattractive person and, perhaps, some minor physical disability, she would probably not have added to her mental list of his disqualifications the words "conceit" and "impertinence."

There is, however, nothing so unreasoning as feminine pride, and had she been disposed to do him bare justice she must have admitted to herself that he approached her as one who is anything but sure of his welcome, and that his manner of greeting, while by no means ingratiating, betrayed a certain diffidence, if not an appeal. But since she regarded him as the man who had both grievously injured and insulted—the insult, being deliberate, had been worse than the injury—the person she loved best, it was scarcely to be expected that she would concern herself with justice, much less charity.

Yet, had the injury been less recent, the "insult" might have been less unpardonable; indeed, her present attitude might have struck her as not a little absurd, considering that until her uncle's death she had liked Norman Leslie as well as any of the young men of her circle, and perhaps better than most of them. In fact, just before the unfortunate event she had been wondering whether Norman was not becoming rather serious in his attentions, and though the question had disturbed her, it had not exactly filled her with dismay.

Then came the shock! This young man had become rich at the expense of her poor dad, and in her haste she assured herself that he could have done so only by worming his way into the regard of a stupid, absent-minded old man—the Professor had been many years older than his brother—well knowing all the time that her father would suffer. She knew, of course, of the estrangement between the brothers, but not the cause of it, and the possibility of her father having been in the wrong had never occurred to her. The young man was to blame, and his action later, magnificent as she was forced to admit it to be, did not deceive her as to the motive behind it. The cheque for thirty thousand pounds was no generous-minded gift to her father; it was the purchase price of herself; and her pride rose rampant.

And Linda was right—up to a point. One need not doubt that Norman, had there been no charming daughter, would much less blithely have offered to surrender one-half of the fortune, the first news of which had come to him with as great a shock as to the girl. On the other hand, dare one assert that he would *not* have offered to surrender it, even with a pang? For Linda was also wrong, in that she had failed to perceive in the affair a conscience as well as a heart.

Her reception of him now was polite, withal so chilly that he looked twice at the vacant seat at her side. But having come thus far, he had no mind for retreat, and presently he seated himself. As he did so, a tall, heavy man, with a reddish moustache turning grey on a countenance not rendered more attractive by a recent scorching from the sun and sea-air, came along the uncrowded deck, paused at the rail close by, turned his back, and lighted a cigarette.

"Have you been making a stay in Ireland, Miss Vernal?" said Norman, remembering that it had been "Linda" at their last meeting, a dance in Kensington, in the early spring.

"An hour or two in Larne," she replied. "I went over for the sea trip. It has been terribly hot on shore the last two days."

"Same in Ireland. It doesn't strike me as particularly cool even on the water. Extraordinary weather for September."

"Quite."

The conversation could not be called brisk. After a pause he mentioned his brother's wedding in Dublin.

"Then you are now on your way back to London," she said, in a tone that, somehow, suggested satisfaction, if not relief.

"I'm stopping to-night in Stranraer."

"Oh, really!" It is wonderful how much boredom a woman can get into the phrase.

"I'm stopping," said Norman, hurt but determined, "because I want very much to see your father. I should like to have your permission to call this evening."

This time she was not so ready with her answer.

"May I ask when you left London?" she said, somewhat abruptly.

"The night before yesterday."

She considered for a moment. "Then you had not heard from that Mr.——I forget his name"—a fib—"the lawyer who wrote to my father?"

"I was in his office the day before yesterday. I read your father's letter—written by you, was it not?"

The tan on her fair face deepened. "My father does not always feel like writing," she replied, "but the letter was written at his dictation, and it said all that there was to be said, Mr. Leslie."

"Still, I hope he won't refuse to receive me when I call shortly after eight." He regarded her straightly. "Surely you do not absolutely forbid me?"

"Suppose I do," she said, her eyes on the back of the man at the rail.

"I'm sorry, but I shall disobey you. After all," he said, asserting himself, "my business, Miss Vernal, is with your father."

"And you don't care whether you will be welcome or not!"

"I care very much—and you know I do! You know, also, that you are treating me most unfairly, most unjustly!"

"Upon my word!"

"You have no cause for your indignation. If you will allow me to explain certain things——"

"No!"

"Then will you tell me why you did not answer my letters of some months ago?"

"I answered them—with silence."

"You thought they deserved nothing more?"

"Obviously!"

Softly he said: "D——n the money!" And aloud: "Why do you regard me as an enemy?"

"I don't."

"But you don't regard me as a friend?"

"No."

"I see!" he said, with a rueful smile. "I simply don't matter to you."

There was a pause till he said:—

"Very well! We are antagonists, for you are against me, and I refuse to turn back. I had hoped you would allow me to talk to you, as a friend, about this confounded money."

"Don't name it!" she exclaimed.

"I had even hoped that, as regards your father, you would, after hearing me, be willing to help me to—— Why, what is it, Linda?"

For she had given a start and her hand was on his sleeve.

"Careful!" she whispered. "That man—I'm sure he's listening! Look at the stiffness of his shoulders." Then, in her ordinary voice: "I must ask you to excuse me. I'm going below for a cup of tea." She rose.

"May I not——?" He rose also.

"Good-bye," she said curtly, and left him.

NORMAN sat down again. He took a glance at the figure by the rail. Its attitude did seem to have relaxed. For a moment he felt like getting up and kicking the fellow; then it occurred to him that Linda might have been imagining things; and presently the man moved leisurely away.

Norman forgot about him and spent the remainder of the journey in pacing the deck and looking out for Linda's return. She did not appear, however, until the ship was being warped to Stranraer quay, and then she was in the midst of a throng of passengers waiting to disembark. It was plain enough that she was avoiding him.

On the quay, having observed her board a two-seater car in charge of a lad, he went to seek a conveyance to take him to his hotel. He was stepping into a bus when the lad, breathing quickly, touched his arm, thrust a note into his hand, and ran off.

The message, pencilled on the ship's paper, was brief:—

"That man seems to be interested in you, also your suit-cases. Have been watching him from the saloon windows."

Norman looked sharply around. The two-seater was already moving, Linda intent on her driving. There was no sign of the man of the sunburnt countenance, but for the moment Norman was affected less by the warning than by the girl's thought for him which it suggested; he was, in fact, too pleased to be annoyed.

But as the bus rumbled up to the town he, the only passenger, began to wonder. Could Mr. Bale have been right in his

parting words at the station—" You are running a big risk, Mr. Leslie "? Yet how was anyone to know that he was carrying the money — unless he had been actually seen drawing it over the bank counter, and had been shadowed ever since ? But, even so, there had been opportunities before and after leaving London of disposing of the money without a shadower's knowledge. Therefore the shadower—if he existed—must have been aware of the money's destination. Which was absurd ! Whereupon Norman smiled tenderly. Bless her dear, vivid imagination ! If only she would turn it in another direction !

At length the bus stopped at the hotel door. Lord, how hot and close was the atmosphere ! He learned that dinner was at seven, ordered a car for eight o'clock, and, having an hour to spare, decided to have a bath and change of raiment.

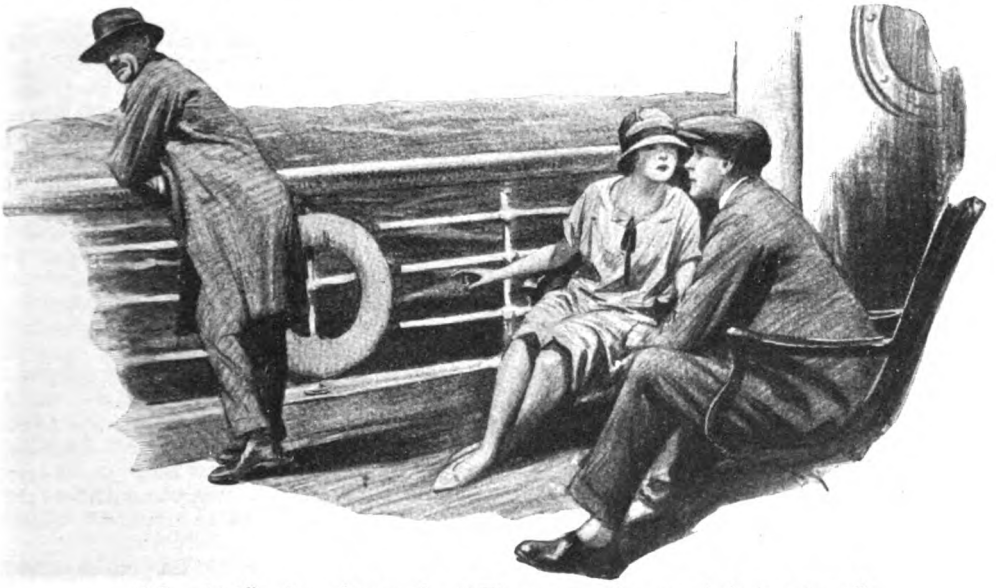
Refreshed, though still conscious of the sultriness, he was preparing to leave his room, when in his watch-pocket he came on Linda's note. It gave him an idea, though not a very serious one. With more amusement than earnestness he arranged the contents of his two suit-cases so that any tampering would be evident to himself, and, leaving the cases unlocked, went downstairs.

MEANWHILE Linda had arrived at the cottage in Cairnryan. Her father was sitting in the garden. It struck her that he was looking very weary and frailer than ever she had seen him.

" You have been feeling the heat, Daddy," she said, her hand on his shoulder. " It really was not much cooler on the water. Never saw such a flat calm."

He nodded listlessly. " Thunder, I suppose." He put his hand to his pocket. " I have a letter——"

" Not a nice one, I guess, but never mind it just now. I must tell you that, on the steamer coming back, I met Mr. Leslie——"



" Careful ! " she whispered. " That man—I'm sure he's listening ! "

" Leslie ! " The invalid sat up. " What was he doing——? "

" He insists on coming to see you this evening. Of course, I shall tell him you are not well enough——"

" What does he want with me ? " The question was almost a cry.

" What he wanted before—to make you take that wretched money ! "

Mr. Vernal lay back in his chair, saying softly, " Thank God ! "

" Daddy, you don't mean that ! "

" My dear, I've been cursing myself ever since I let you send that letter to the lawyer. I ought not to have been influenced by you. Pride is all very well, but poverty——"

" But we're no poorer than we were three days ago."

" Alas, we are ! Murgatroyds will pay no dividend this year. There's the letter."

She waved it aside. " Then you will take the money from Mr. Leslie ? "

" And bless him for it ! I refused it in my haste. That he should again offer it is a wonderful thing. We have no right to reject such generosity, Linda."

" You—you don't understand everything. Well, you must do as you wish, Daddy; only you must never again mention this money to me," faltered the girl. " I—I shall be out when Mr. Leslie calls." Turning abruptly, she ran into the house.

She had a feeling of having been beaten which, with all her tenderness for her father, she found hard to endure; and her resentment against circumstances did not pass even when he came in to supper, with a lightness of step and brightness of eye which she had missed in him for many a day.

Knowing his daughter, Mr. Vernal made no attempt to alter her attitude towards the money.

" Feels as if we should have a big storm before morning," he remarked. " I've been watching a motor-launch come in in the dusk—that big sea-going boat they charter from Stranraer. The two fellows on board didn't seem too sure of their bearings, and I think they've anchored too far out, and in a bad place. If the weather breaks and a gale comes along—but no doubt someone will warn them."

" I'll row out after supper and give them a hint," said Linda. " Yes, I dare say it will be pretty dark "—she went on in reply to his protest—" but I know the shore lights by this time. Please don't fuss, Daddy."

Knowing his daughter, Mr. Vernal did not fuss—outwardly, at any rate.

At eight o'clock Linda left the cottage and went down to the beach.

At the same hour Norman stepped from the hotel and entered the car. He had examined the suit-cases, without finding a sign of tampering. So much for Linda's darling imagination! Last thing, in the locked bedroom, he had made the bank-notes, hitherto carried in a belt, into two tight bundles and placed them in the inner pockets of his jacket. Bank of England notes are singularly unbulky things, and it's astonishing how little space is occupied by two lots of a hundred and fifty. His chest measurement, after he had buttoned his jacket, was not notably increased.

Within a few minutes the car was clear of the town and running down the loch-side in the heavy darkness. The driver was not talkative, and Norman was disposed to dream. Five miles had been covered when his thoughts, all of a sudden, took an unpleasant turn.

Suppose that he *was* being shadowed, and that the shadower did know his destination. Suppose, further, that the shadower was, somehow, aware of his mission. Then would it not be a safer game for the shadower to bide his time? An invalid man, a defenceless girl, and, perhaps, a serving maid, in a cottage outside the village; Norman had inquired as to its situation; a black night; and thirty thousand pounds for the taking—surely the shadower, if he existed, would have thought of all that and laid his plans accordingly!

Norman began to wish he had waited till morning. What sort of gift would it be, were it to involve in danger those whom it was meant to benefit?

Norman called himself an ass. Mr. Bale had been right. The bank-notes idea had been that of an idiot. He fell to meditating a dash back to Stranraer, there to deposit the notes, made up in a sealed package, in the hotel safe, and the purchase, or borrowing, of a stout stick; then a return to Cairnryan, where, after an empty-handed interview with Mr. Vernal, he would depart with a cheerful good night and secretly proceed to guard the house till morning.

The lights of Cairnryan were in sight when those thoughts were abruptly scattered by an exclamation from the driver and his application of the brake. In the middle of the road the figure of a man waving an electric torch stood out in the shine of the lamps. For an instant Norman imagined a hold-up, an ambush. But, as the car stopped, the man, who was youngish and clad in light flannels, came forward, saying pleasantly:—

" Sorry to stop you, but do you happen to be Mr. Leslie?"

" Yes," answered Norman, still on the alert.

" Good! My name is Ross, and I have a message for you from my neighbour, Mr. Vernal. Mr. Vernal has been feeling the heat badly, and I'm taking him for a spin down the loch in my motor-boat. He is already on board and hopes you will join him."

" Thank you——" Norman hesitated.

" I gathered that you and Mr. Vernal have a little business to discuss. If your time is too limited to allow of that being done afterwards on shore, I will see to it that you get peace and privacy on board, and, when you wish, I shall be happy to run you up to Stranraer. So there will be no need for you to keep the car."

It occurred to Norman that nothing better could have happened. With so friendly a neighbour the safeguarding of Mr. Vernal and his affairs was assured.

" Thanks again," he said more warmly. " Is Miss Vernal on board also?"

" No; Miss Vernal has kindly asked us all to sup, after our little cruise."

Feeling that things were moving very nicely indeed—it would be easier to talk to Mr. Vernal alone, and, evidently, both he

and Linda were no longer so resentful—Norman alighted and settled with the driver.

"This way, Mr. Leslie," said Mr. Ross, indicating with his torch-light a path down to the beach. "How did you leave London? The last two days here have been blazers. Even I, who am used to the open, am finding my complexion suffer! Let us hope we may find a breeze on the loch."

LINDA, having rowed a short distance from the shore, lay on her oars. She had not come out for exercise, but to be alone—and truly here was loneliness. No other craft moved on the black, oily waters. It was getting late in the season, and the riding-light of the motor launch out yonder had a solitary aspect. Time enough, she reflected, to warn those on board regarding their anchorage, and, any way, the ebbing tide was carrying her in that direction.

Linda was still conscious of the beaten feeling, but it was somehow mitigated. Though the thing she had fought against had come to pass, she was feeling less humiliated than she could have imagined possible. Her father's surrender seemed to have absolved her of a vow. She was free to take a larger view of Norman Leslie's action, free to question whether she had judged him altogether fairly, and to admit that, whatever his motive, he had done a big and generous thing. It was horrid to have to confess oneself in the wrong; she could not—would not—do that just yet; but in her heart she realized that she would be unhappy until her surrender was as complete as her father's.

She awoke, as it were, with a start. The tide was running strongly; she must not let herself be carried too far. She was now off the seaward side of the motor-launch and within easy hailing distance. But, since there was no one on deck, she decided to go alongside. She was gripping her oars when she noticed that the launch was without a small boat astern. That surely meant that the people were ashore, in which case they would almost certainly get the necessary warning from some well-intentioned villager.

Linda therefore prepared for a leisurely pull towards the land, though she had no intention of going ashore. She could not face Norman to-night. Just then, however, a sound from the launch stayed the dipping of her oars.

A man emerged from the cabin and stood, with his back to her, gazing shorewards, a dim figure in the darkness. After a while he stepped forward to the lantern fixed on a support a few feet above the deck, looked at his watch, and returned to his look-out.

Linda's glimpse of the illumined face was short but satisfying. Without a doubt he was the man—the "listening man," as she thought of him—whom she had seen on the steamer! Whereupon she frowned—and smiled. So he was only a decent, though inquisitive, holiday-maker, after all! How Norman must have been amused by her silly little note!

She had determined to row alongside and deliver the warning, when her ears caught the sound of oars. Probably the man's companion returning, she reflected, and decided to wait and see.

Before long she could discern the shadowy little craft; later, she fancied, she detected two passengers; and then it disappeared behind the hull of the launch.

Now she saw the "listening man" do rather an odd thing—crouch down by the cabin's dark skylight, as though to avoid observation. While yet she wondered came the noises of oars being shipped and the dinghy colliding lightly with the launch. A voice said:—

"One moment till I make fast. Now, please, excuse my going first."

A man scrambled upon the deck of the launch and turned, reaching down his hand. Another appeared, and for an instant his face was full in the light of the lantern.

"Norman!" murmured the girl, and a cry froze at her lips as the crouching man rose, seizing Norman from behind, while the hand of the other darted to his throat. A struggle followed.

This time Linda dipped her oars—dug them into the brine. The little boat spun round and shot forward. It was a matter of seconds till its bow smote the hull of the launch.

"Beasts—cowards—what are you doing?"

The gentlemen thus addressed might well be pardoned some natural astonishment at the voice and apparition of the girl out of the darkness.

"Linda!" gasped Norman. Wresting himself free, he sprang across the deck.

"Jump!" she cried.

"No—'twould upset the boat." He tore off his jacket and flung it to her. "Row—row—don't question—get ashore—home!"

They were on him again, the older man enveloping him from behind.

"Go!" he yelled—and Linda, for once in her life, did as she was told, she could never afterwards explain why.

She was not a dozen yards away when—

"Stop!" cried "Mr. Ross." Letting go his grasp of Norman, he snatched out and pointed a revolver at the girl.

She rowed on.

"Stop!" There was an evil note in the word.

"Stop, Linda!" called Norman. He was

She was not a dozen yards away when—
"Stop!" cried "Mr. Ross," pointing a revolver at the girl.

held fast, but he was also supported, by the older man, and he was within striking distance of the younger.

Linda obeyed.

"That's better," said "Mr. Ross." "Now bring back that jacket before I give your gentleman friend a bullet."

Even as he smirked, the heel of Norman's boot took him in the lower ribs and sent him reeling towards the stern. He had all but recovered his balance when his foot caught the coaming, and he toppled down into the motor-pit.

"Row, Linda!" shouted Norman.

"Curse you!" snarled his captor and unloosed one grip in order to deal a blow.

It was a blunder. Norman wriggled free, and it was he who dealt the blow.

"Splendid!" came a voice, breathlessly, from the darkness.

As Norman afterwards declared, it filled him full of beans. He hammered that wretched sunburnt face round the deck, and finally flung its possessor on top of his partner, who was in the act of rising from the pit.

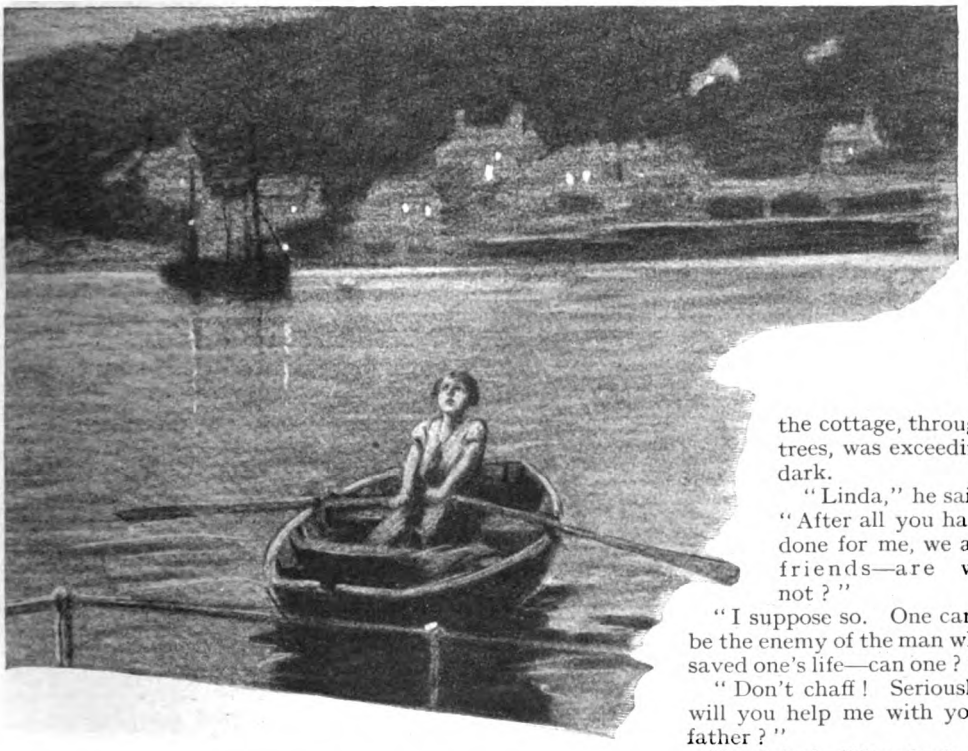
And this time the revolver went off.

"Blast you!" rose a howl of wrath. "The bullet has done for the motor—snapped the——"

Norman did not hear the end of it. He was pushing off in the dinghy, in the wake of Linda.

He soon overtook her, but they were experiencing the reaction, and it was almost in silence that they pulled side by side, she guiding, to the shore. He landed first and helped her out. She was trembling slightly.

"Your jacket," she murmured. "How



silly of you to carry valuables like that! At least, I suppose that's what those beasts were after."

"I had better tell you the truth," he said, slipping it on. "They were after your father's share. Like an ass, I thought he might be a little easier to persuade if I brought it in bank-notes."

"Oh, goodness! How perfectly mad!"

"Yes," he said, humbly. "And but for you it would all be gone. If you hadn't appeared when you did——"

"And but for you I should be dead! That wretch meant to shoot——"

"Only to scare you, Linda," he said, for she had shuddered.

"Oh, don't spoil it all!" she said, with a small laugh. "Let us make the adventure as romantic as possible."

"Then I'll go down on my knees and——"

"I did not ask for foolishness," she said, soberly. "Help me to moor those boats. Father will be wondering why you have not arrived. And we must call at the police station."

"No hurry for that," he remarked. "The one with the pistol managed to hit the motor. They're as good as in jail."

They moored the boats, and then she guided him up to the road. The way to the cottage, through trees, was exceeding dark.

"Linda," he said. "After all you have done for me, we are friends—are we not?"

"I suppose so. One can't be the enemy of the man who saved one's life—can one?"

"Don't chaff! Seriously, will you help me with your father?"

She sighed. "You don't require my help. You won't find Daddy difficult—now. Oh, you needn't thank me. He has changed his mind about the—the money."

"Thank Heaven! And you?"

"No!"

"But, Linda—I'm sure it would be so much pleasanter for your father—won't you take it and give it quietly to him, without a word from me?"

"Oh, never!"

"I mean—won't you take it—and me, too?"

"Oh!" cried Linda.

The sky flared.

"Oh!" she cried, loudly.

The thunder crashed.

"Oh!" she cried, very loudly.

And in the throbbing silence that followed—

"Oh," said Linda, in a mere whisper, "Norman!"

NORMAN did not send a wire to Mr. Bale in the morning, but Mr. Bale, just when he was beginning to hope that all had gone well, learned from a total stranger that the goods had been duly delivered. Incidentally, the total stranger, who wore heavy square boots and a jaw of similar make, advised Mr. Bale to say nothing and come quietly.

Some Great Golf Matches

By

BERNARD DARWIN

I DO not think that I am a natural watcher of golf matches. To-day I confess to feeling some contempt for those who, when knocked out of a tournament, go on hitting their own ball and cannot spare a moment to look at the battles of those who have survived. But there was a time when I was much inclined to do likewise and thought watching golf something of a bore. When I took to writing about golf it became my business to watch, whereupon I began to enjoy it and have enjoyed it ever since.

It was not till 1908 that I began regularly to watch golf matches, but some of the most dramatic ones, which have left the clearest pictures on my mind, came before that. It was exactly ten years before, in 1898 at Hoylake, that I first played in the Amateur Championship. My own career ended in the third round, and after that I watched hard. In the fourth round Mr. Hilton met Mr. F. G. Tait, and it was felt that whatever else might happen this was to be *the* match. Mr. Hilton was then Open Champion for the second time, and ever since he had won the title at Hoylake the year before he had been playing magnificently, the most consistently good golf of his life. I still remember very well the first time I set eyes on him at this very meeting. He was playing spoon shots in the "field." I can see the very clothes he had on, and I can see his arms coming right through time after time and a little crop of balls whitening the ground as he pitched them within a yard or two of one another.

He had then never yet won the Amateur Championship, but there was a general feeling that his time had come at last. This much, however, was certain—that no one could be sure it had come so long as Mr. Tait, who had barred his progress too often, was still in the way. Mr. Hilton had got through his first rounds easily enough. Exactly how well Mr. Tait had been playing I do not remember, but I do remember very well seeing him before luncheon putting backwards and forwards at the holes inside the white chains in front of the club. Someone asked him how he was playing, and he answered, cheerfully, "All right, except this part of the game, and this will be all right in the afternoon." He sounded thoroughly confident, and as if his spirits were rising at the thought of the big battle. Meanwhile, I don't think Mr. Hilton's spirits were rising. All the world and his wife were pouring out of Liverpool to come and watch. All of them

An interesting early portrait of Mr. Harold H. Hilton.

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wanted Mr. Hilton to win; a good many said so to him, and to anyone in a highly-strung frame of mind good wishes can be hard things to bear.

For about four holes that match was a match, and after that it was an inexpressibly sad procession. It did not begin very brilliantly, for Mr. Tait began with five, five, six, and yet he was one up. I have a vision of Mr. Hilton putting very, very weakly at the second, but exactly what happened I do not now know. Then at the Cop Mr. Tait holed rather a good putt and Mr. Hilton missed a pretty short one. That was two up, and the heads of assembled Hoylake began visibly to hang. It seemed like the old story again. At the sixth, the Briars, Mr. Tait holed a tremendous putt for three right across the green, and I can see him thrust his right leg forward with a most characteristic movement as the ball went in. That was three up, and from that point the match was over. I have visions of Mr. Tait holing another putt somewhere else, though I can find no record of it; but no more long putts were needed, for poor Mr. Hilton was beating himself. It was a miserable crowd that wandered home from the Rushes green. The picture of the defeated champion still gives me a pang. As he was walking back, a little perky, Cockney, good-natured cock-sparrow of a golfer, now dead, came up to him and said, "Well, Harold, I don't think you ever will win this Championship." Such is tact.

Lieut. F. G. Tait.

THE next year, 1899, I again played in the Championship, this time at Prestwick. Thus I saw what I imagine may still be called the greatest and most dramatic final that has ever been played—namely, that between Mr. Ball and Mr. Tait. One shot played in that match has been described over and over again, and often wrongly—namely, the shot that Mr. Tait played out of the water in the Alps bunker; but that shot provided only the greatest, though not the last, of a great number of thrills.

I did not see the morning round, being, I am now ashamed to say, engaged in a game of my own at Troon. All we heard at Troon was that Mr. Tait was five up, and as I was staying with a large and patriotic Scottish family, my sentiments and theirs did not coincide. When I got to Prestwick I found that things were not quite so bad, for Mr. Ball had got two holes back out of the last four and was only three down. At the moment he was having a putting lesson from Mr. Hilton on the last green, with clubs strewn around him. He had by all accounts needed it sorely in the first round, and in the second, though he putted well enough, he was ringing the changes on some three different clubs, including, I think, a long-shafted driving cleek.

The individual strokes at the beginning of the game I do not remember, even though I have tried to refresh my memory by reading a contemporary account. That which remains in my mind is a general feeling of the run of the play as it affected my own emotions. Mr. Ball won two out of the first three holes, and that was down to one, and I was in the seventh heaven. He lost the next and I was beginning to feel depressed. He won the next two: all square, and I was dancing on air. There was no doubt now which of the two was the hunted and which the hunter. The Englishman was attacking ruthlessly: the Scot defending bravely, but still obviously defending. He was playing like a weary man, and, indeed, I believe he was one, for Mr. Low has recorded in his life of Tait that he lay down on a sofa after lunch and said—very unlike him—that he felt tired. Nevertheless, the attack could now make no progress for a while. It was all square at the turn, all square at the tenth, and then Mr. Ball missed a putt and his opponent got the lead again, and to do that at such a moment in a match may be worth untold gold.

Clearly it was a critical moment, and almost before we realized it the invaluable lead was lost again. While the crowd was still pouring down the long flat open space that led to the wall, Mr. Tait had driven and

hit so prodigious a hook that he carried over the spectators' heads and over the burn and out of bounds. Again the match was square, and with four to go Mr. Ball was one up. He lost his next but won the Cardinal's Back. Now surely, surely, he would not lose the lead again. My recollection is that to the historic Alps Mr. Tait played the odd; I felt sure his second was in the bunker, probably in the water, and in my own mind I thought Mr. Ball should have played short, and have made sure of his five. No doubt my youthful judgment was wrong. Mr. Ball must have come very, very near to getting over, and in any case I did not make enough allowance for two things: first, that bunkers had no terrors for him; second, that at so tremendous a moment it was the natural and probably the right instinct to go all out to win the match.

The late Mr. J. R. Gairdner was standing next to me as the famous water shot was played. There were little wavelets on the big puddle, making the ball rock, and he called out, probably quite oblivious that he was not talking to himself, "Wait till it settles, Freddie; wait till it settles." It was a grand shot, no doubt of that, and as the hero waded out again he was helped up the bank by willing hands, like another Horatius emerging from the Tiber. Long before the cheering had ceased Mr. Ball had played an almost equally great shot from horrid, hard, wet sand with the boarded face close to him. He has, however, always had a genius all his own for making the ball get up almost vertically if he wants to, and out it came, apparently with the utmost ease. Then at the last hole Mr. Tait got the most gallant possible three—three fine shots one after another—and still it was all to play for.

At this point some of the Hoylake stalwarts could bear it no more, and retired to the club-house, where they waited for news, presumably groaning dismally like Mr. Winkle with their heads under the sofa cushions. The rest of the world rushed tumultuously out towards the first hole, and it became very hard to see anything. This I remember well, because when the first ball came pitching on to the green and, pitching unluckily, ran over to the far edge, I thought that Mr. Ball had probably played the odd, and so that this was his ball. When the second ball pitched, squirming and screwing its way into the turf, and stopped close to the hole, I thought that all was over. It was quite a perceptible while before my mourning was turned into joy.

Mr. Tait had a most difficult approach putt: he hit it extraordinarily well, boldly and truly, and the ball lay as near as might be dead. And then—how long was Mr. Ball's putt, and did I actually see him hole it? Honestly I do not know. I should guess the putt was one of eight feet, and I believe that I saw the ball go in, but could not see the player strike it. At any rate, it went in, and the more matches I watch the more I think that this was the greatest, the most prostratingly exciting of them all.

LET us pass on to 1904, which was, of course, Mr. Walter Travis's year at Sandwich. So much has been written of him and his black cigar and his demoniacal putting that I will not say it all over again. Everybody knows that he did it with the mallet-headed weapon called the Schenectady which he had borrowed from a friend only a few days before the Championship began. The picture that I retain is not of Mr. Travis actually putting, but of him standing wonderfully still after he had putted, with his head still down, looking with those inscrutable eyes of his at the ball as it ran. I once saw a famous archer shoot, and what impressed me about him was that he stayed immobile with his hand still drawn back and touching his ear until the arrow had sunk into the target a hundred yards away. He brought back to me the image of Mr. Travis, perfectly still, watching his ball till it was in the hole.

If Mr. Edward Blackwell could have putted then with his cleek as he does now, when he is three-and-twenty years older, with an aluminium putter, the result might have been different. And yet I don't know, and it ill becomes any Briton to say even so much. Nobody ever more thoroughly deserved his championship than Mr. Travis did. Nor was it only won by putting. He was striking the ball beautifully clean with all his clubs. A couple of spoon shots hit through the cross wind up to that narrow hog's-back of a second green linger in the memory: as does another lovely one up to the twelfth. Just before that final match began, Mr. Devereux Emmet, the well-known American golfer and now a golf architect, said to me in solemn tones, "You may not believe me, but you'll see. This man is one of the great golfers." He was quite right.

MUIRFIELD in 1909 saw an unforgettable final between Mr. Maxwell and Mr. (he is now Major) Cecil Hutchison. I call it unforgettable because the finish was desperately close and the golf throughout of a wonderfully uniform excellence. And yet, perhaps for that very reason, I do forget it. There were so few mistakes made, the play was so straight, there were so few recoveries needed that, save for the last two holes, there seems nothing of which the memory can take hold. The two players were old friends, they had

played many games together on the East Lothian courses, and they played this one rather like a casual friendly game, very quickly and without, as it appeared, any laborious carefulness.

Most matches are won not by some fierce thrust of the victor, but through a mistake of the loser. This match was an exception to the rule, for it was won by one supremely bold and skilful stroke. With two to play, Mr. Maxwell was one down. The seventeenth hole, as it then was, was not a very difficult four, calling for no more than a drive and a mashie niblick shot, but the conformation of the ground made it hard to put the second really near the hole. Mr. Hutchison as the leader played the hole exactly as he should—a drive well out to the right clear of all danger, a steady pitch on to the middle of the green, and two putts. Mr. Maxwell, having to take a risk, hugged the rough as nearly as he dared on the left. This shot, precisely struck, gave him the strategic position he wanted: he had something of a gully up which to play his second, played it to perfection, got his three, and squared the match in his adversary's teeth. The last hole turned on the putting. Neither was quite dead in three; Mr. Hutchison played first and missed; Mr. Maxwell took his opening, but that opening was not really given him by his adversary missing his putt; he had forced it for himself by taking a brave risk "according to plan" at the seventeenth. I travelled South with Mr. Hutchison that night, and as we were waiting for our sleeping car on Drem platform I remember his saying to me, "Well, one gets as near as that and then one has to begin all over again." It was a true remark. The chance does not come often save to the very few.

Mr. Walter Travis, whose demoniacal putting with a Schenectady putter won him the Amateur Championship of 1904.

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A TERRIBLE battle was that at Westward Ho! in 1912, when Mr. John Ball beat Mr. Abe Mitchell, then still an amateur, at the thirty-eighth hole. Mr. Ball had begun that championship meeting in one of his apparently lazy moods. He had played downright ill in the international match, which was that year played entirely by foursomes. After that he had improved and fought his way into the sixth round, when he met Mr. F. S. Bond, and Mr. Bond, playing uncommonly well, appeared to have the match at his mercy. I think he was five up with seven to play when Mr. Ball began to spurt. Two holes were lopped off, but even so Mr. Bond was dormy three. The strain was telling on him, however, and Mr. Ball was playing like clockwork, holing no long putts but sticking ruthlessly to the perfect figure. And so all those three holes dropped away and the nineteenth as well, and Mr. Ball miraculously survived. He beat Mr. Angus Hambro comfortably in the semi-final, and there he was, yet again in the final of the Championship. Meanwhile Mr. Mitchell, though he had had one or two close runs, was yet looking all the time like a winner. He had had a good deal of experience since he had appeared raw and fresh from his native Ashdown two years before at Hoylake, and the long course suited his tremendous driving. He was not then the accurate player that he is now; in particular he had not mastered the controlled iron shot which is to-day such a feature of his game, but, as far as pure length was concerned, I am inclined to think that he was longer than he is to-day, and he was always a neat pitcher with a mashie. There were certain holes at Westward Ho! that year which he seemed to be able to reach with a drive and an iron, while no one else reached them in two shots of any kind.

That he could beat Mr. Ball for length was certain ; beyond that no one could prophesy.

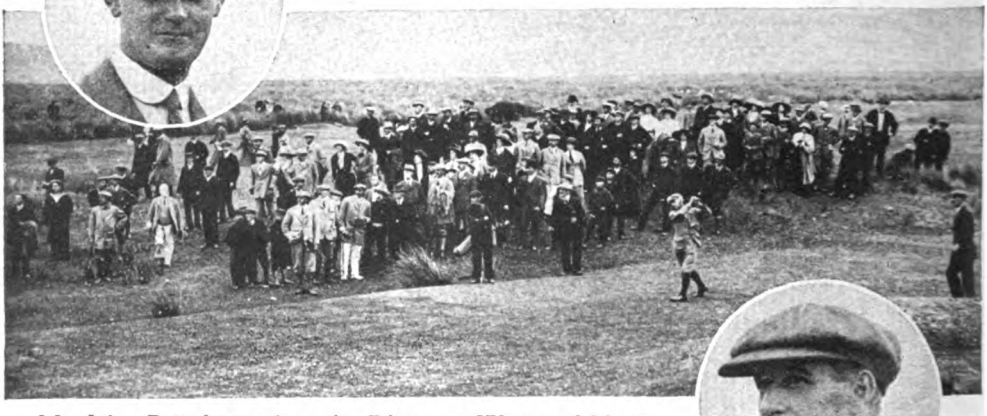
When I remember this match I always think of the great scene at the prize fight in "Lavengro," in which a gallant boy is fighting an older man who "has a frame of adamant." Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has borrowed from it, unless I am much mistaken, in "Rodney Stone" ; at any rate, the fight of Jack Harrison, the old blacksmith, and Crab Wilson, the young man from the West, has a striking resemblance to it. There comes on a great storm, and then "the man goes to work amidst rain and hail." It came on wet and stormy at Westward Ho ! and while this exactly suited the dogged genius of Mr. Ball, it did not suit his adversary, who had some difficulty in holding his wet clubs ; he lost something of the length of his driving, and with it his one distinct advantage.

There was, as I think, another factor worth mentioning, and that was the behaviour of a section of the crowd. There trooped out of Bideford a body of spectators who knew very little about golf, but appeared to be imbued with a violent and wholly inappropriate class feeling : there was a working man in the final, and they had come to see him win. Not content with this reasonable partisanship, they fanned themselves into a still warmer flame by imagining Mr. Ball as the typical aristocrat and capitalist, trampling on the honest workman. Their behaviour was at once venomous and absurd.

It was utterly repugnant to Mr. Mitchell, whom they supported, and did him no good, and probably a good deal of harm. As to Mr. Ball, if it had any effect on him at all, it was to harden his resolution and make him set his teeth even more tightly. To make him angry is the way to make him win.

At the end of the first round youth was three up on age, and three holes should surely take a lot of getting back against superior length on a very long course. I remember to have been told, whether truly or not I do not know, that Mr. Ball himself made a prophecy at this point ; it was that if he could hold his man for the first three holes after lunch he might just about be able to do it. These first three holes, with the wind blowing as it was, gave the long driver an advantage ; and the prophecy, if it was made, was an astute one. In fact, Mr. Ball did better than hold his own in those three, for he got one back ; he had the turn of the luck at the short hole, and was now not only within striking distance but right on his enemy's heels. That enemy, however, had plenty of fight left in him, and the match went on with thrilling ups and downs till it was all square with three to play. On the sixteenth green Mr. Ball, with a putt for the half, was laid what looked the deadest stymie that ever was laid, the adversary's ball on the brink of the hole and no apparent way round—no, not a ghost of one. Mr. Ball looked at his opponent with a smile half quizzical, wholly good natured, and there are not many people who could smile at such a moment. Then he settled down to his putt and, with an aluminium putter of all

Mr. John Ball.



Mr. John Ball driving from the 7th tee at Westward Ho ! in the final of the 1912 Amateur Championship.

Photos : Sport & General.

Mr. Abe Mitchell.

unlikely clubs, played the shot at exactly the dead strength and by some miracle holed it.

All square with two to play, and then Mr. Ball missed his second to the long seventeenth and Mr. Mitchell was dormy. Both of them were over the black and oozy burn in two, neither was quite dead in three. I imagine each ball lay four or perhaps five feet away. Mr. Mitchell had to play. This for the Championship! No doubt the putt looked horribly long to him at that moment. He pushed the ball out to the right of the hole, and made a gesture of stifled despair. Mr. Ball rapped his in, right at the back of the hole, and the crowd rushed out across the burn again.

The nineteenth was marked by two splendid recovering shots, Mr. Ball from a bunker on the right, Mr. Mitchell from a watery ditch on the left (it was the Alps at Prestwick over again), and the hole was halved in five. At this point I raced away down the fairway of the second hole in order to see the second shots. One ball came right down the middle of the course: that was Mr. Ball's. There followed a long pause: no second ball came. What on earth had happened? Clearly some tragedy had overtaken Mr. Mitchell, but what could it be? "The match is over"—the word was passed along, and we rushed back bewildered. Mr. Mitchell had topped his ball into a ditch and in trying to get out had hit the ball on to himself. Mr. Ball had won his eighth championship. Will any other man ever win so many again?

Mr. Cyril Tolley playing a shot out of the rough during the final for the Amateur Championship at Muirfield in 1920.

Photo: Sport & General.

AFTER that titanic struggle at Westward Ho! the next three championships before the war seem in the recollection a little flat by comparison, but when we have made a long jump and come to 1920 at Muirfield we come to a truly memorable Anglo-American match—that between Mr. Gardner and Mr. Tolley.

I have been trying to remember when we began seriously to be frightened of Mr. Gardner in that championship. I do not think—perhaps we were too arrogant—that it was until he met Mr. Gordon Lockhart in the fifth round. It was when he was holding the Prestwick player and beginning to look as if he was going to beat him that the American terror began to spread, and then it spread fast and furiously. This match was an exciting one, and Mr. Gardner was dormy one; he had to play the odd on the last green, a long putt down the slope; he holed it for three, and that was that. Next he had to meet Mr. Michael Scott in the semi-final. Mr. Scott went off like a shot out of a gun by taking the first hole, then a one-shot hole, in two. He followed this up with a tremendous tee-shot right down the course and looked as invincible as he always does, inscrutable and immovable. Our hopes were high, and then he completely missed his mashie pitch and did not, I think, even reach the cross bunker. Our hopes dropped again with a bump and Mr. Scott never quite recovered from that shot. It was not so much, I think, that the loss of the hole worried him as that it came to him like a thunderclap that he could make such a shot. He is one of the most flawless of iron players and he had been playing more flawlessly than usual. How could such a thing occur? It must be a dreadful dream, but no! "Demmit," he must have said, with Mr. Mantalini, "it is a horrid reality." He fought bravely, but he was always a little "up against it" from that moment; something had gone out of his game, and Mr. Gardner, playing very soundly and hitting the ball very cleanly with his aluminium putter, won by two.

So now Mr. Tolley was our last line of defence. It was his first championship, but he had crowded a good deal of golfing experience into his year or so of golf since the war; his confidence had not been shaken by any slings and arrows, and he had shown a commendable wisdom in driving with his spoon and so keeping the ball in play. I remember that Hagen and another of the American professionals were there on the day of the semi-final. In the evening they were looking at the Championship Cup, and one of them said that it would look very nice on the other side. I think that the general opinion was that it would go there.

Mr. Tolley had some staunch adherents, but as a whole we had our tails rather between our legs, especially those of us who remembered Mr. Travis and 1904.

I am not going to describe the whole match, for one very good reason that I do not remember it. Everything that went before the last four holes of the second round has grown dim and insignificant. At that point Mr. Tolley, by very sound, confident, and courageous golf, seemed to have worn Mr. Gardner down, so that one more really good punch would finish him. Going to the old fifteenth hole Mr. Gardner was decidedly weak with his second: his ball only just reached the edge of the green; he would clearly have hard work to get his four, and he was three down with four to play. Mr. Tolley had hit a good tee shot and was now to play the like. That which passed through his mind was as clear as print. He knew that the green was fast and that there was a bunker behind it; he knew the temptation to be short always present at that hole, and more than ever so now, when a four meant certainly dormy three, and very possibly four up and three to play.

He put that temptation resolutely from him, hardened his heart, and played a bold straight shot right across the green and into the bunker behind it. Even so matters were far from hopeless, but the ball lay badly; nothing else could have been expected from those malicious ladies, the Fates of golf, and one hole was gone. It was a horrid blow, and the next hole went the same way. At the seventeenth Mr. Gardner holed a very good putt in the odd, and Mr. Tolley replied nobly with the like. The rot, it seemed, had been stopped, but, alas! Mr. Tolley's drive was just a little pushed out and got a bad lie; Mr. Gardner always played that last hole well, playing the second shot with that characteristic push cleek shot of his, and once again he got his four and squared the match.

The thought of the nineteenth hole gives me a feeling of dizziness even now. Mr. Gardner's tee shot was a good one, well on the green but a little to the left. At such a moment it was a very good one, and a very bad one to have to follow. I remember that I lost sight of Mr. Tolley's ball in the air, calling wildly "Where is it?" and then plump it came down, straight on the pin a few yards short. The situation on the green was now not unlike that at the thirty-seventh hole in the Ball-Tait match at Prestwick. A fine iron shot had been followed by one still better, and the putts bore to one another something of the same proportion in length. Mr. Gardner hit his putt beautifully and his ball lay, humanly speaking, dead; Mr. Tolley walked straight up to his and banged it straight in. Never was a ball more boldly hit at a more agonizing moment.

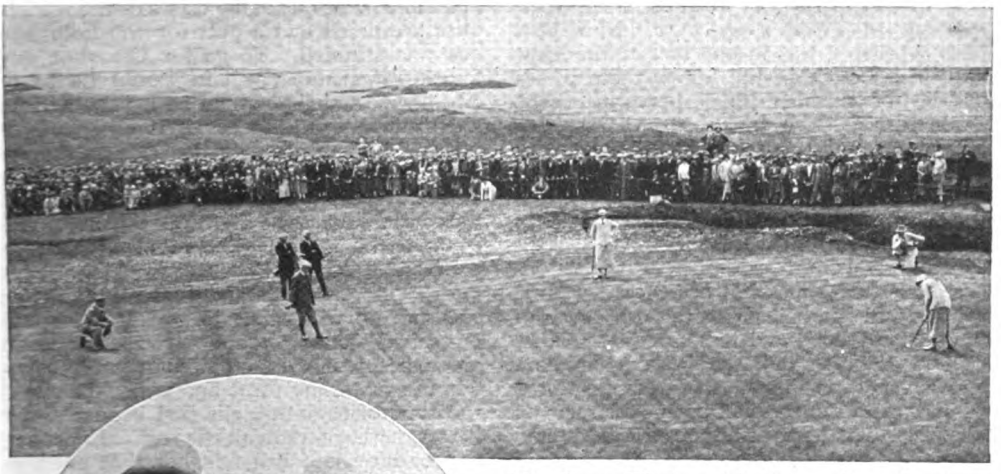
THE Championship of 1921 at Hoylake was one of the most remarkable that ever took place. As it chanced that I myself survived that year to the semi-final, I did not see so much as I ought of what I described. One match, however, or a bit of it, is graven on my memory; it was between Mr. Bobby Jones and Mr. Hamlet. I don't know whether it was more amusing or more exciting or more heart-breaking. One of those gentlemen in the newspapers who are always anxious to tell the world about wholly irrelevant private affairs had informed us, accurately or otherwise, that Mr. Hamlet was a "florist of Wrexham." The name clung, and we spoke of him thus as men spoke a hundred years ago of the Fighting Coachman or the Young Rump Steak. He was, as I imagine, an accurate player and a difficult one to beat on a short course, but Hoylake, hard though it was, was something too long for him, and Mr. Bobby Jones was hitting long distances in his usual effortless way. It did not look like a match at all, but Mr. Jones turned it into a very good one, by making every conceivable sort of error near the green. Going to the seventeenth hole it really looked as if Mr. Jones was going to lose, and one did not know whether to laugh or to cry, but Mr. Hamlet threw a chance away, Mr. Jones actually holed his putt, and he won in the end on the last green.

I AM coming now to times almost too modern, perhaps, to be suitable to reminiscences. Prestwick in 1922 saw an admirable final between Mr.—now Sir Ernest—Holderness and Mr. John Caven, played before an enormous crowd. It finished on the very last green, where both players holed putts which did them infinite credit. I have always thought, however, that the putt which settled that championship was missed and not holed, in the semi-final and not the final. Mr. Holderness was having a fierce match with the holder, Mr. Hunter. On the fifteenth green Mr. Hunter had a putt—quite a short putt—to win the hole and make himself one up. He had been putting very well, and he walked up to that putt with the utmost confidence and hit the ball boldly for the back of the tin. The ball hit the tin, but not in the middle; it not only hopped out again, but managed to screw itself in some mysterious manner behind Mr. Holderness's ball—a dead hopeless stymie. It was said afterwards that the hole was badly cut. I cannot express an opinion, but I think it

unlikely. At any rate, I never saw a hole that more emphatically counted two on a division than that one.

1923 in Deal was Mr. Wethered's great year, and more crushingly brilliant golf was never seen in a final than his against Mr. Harris. Once again the American Walker Cup team may be said to have failed in the Championship, for there was only one of them left in the last eight. That one was Mr. Ouimet, and he had a hard day's work in having to meet Mr. Tolley in the morning and, having disposed of him, Mr. Wethered in the afternoon. I always think that that day's play illustrates very well the rule of Nature which prohibits anybody from holing more than a certain number of good putts in a given time. Mr. Ouimet, as everyone knows, is a beautiful putter. Against Mr. Tolley, whom he beat with comfort by four and three, he holed a number of more than useful putts. When he had to face Mr. Wethered he was conscious, or at any rate he was subconsciously aware, that he had had his ration of putts that day. He did not putt positively ill in the afternoon, but he holed nothing of any consequence and did not look as if he was going to, and Mr. Wethered was always winning.

The two met again in a return match that same summer at St. Andrews in the Walker Cup. For sustained excellence of golf between two amateurs I have never seen it excelled, and I hardly think equalled, and Mr. Ouimet's finish, by which he managed to halve the match, was beyond all praise. To be two up with three to play at St. Andrews, to finish with three fours and only to get a half—this was Mr. Wethered's fate, and it seems a hard one. Mr. Ouimet finished in three, four, three, and his example fired the rest of his side, for they all finished like lions, and our men finished for the most part like very mild lambs.



Miss Joyce Wethered holing an 8-yard putt during the final for the Ladies' Open Championship at Troon in 1925.

Photos: Sport & General.

Miss Joyce Wethered and Miss Cecil Leitch.

One scene from that Walker Cup match I can never forget. There is a room at the top of the Royal and Ancient club-house with a balcony looking down on the last green. On that green the issue of the day was being decided amid desperate excitement, but it did not interest four gentlemen who were playing bridge in the room and bitterly resented the intrusion of those who wanted, ridiculously enough, to look at the golf. Some of us brought the American captain through the room, in order that he might watch from the balcony, and one of the bridge players looked up and exclaimed, "Shut that d——d door!" He was doubtless beyond shame, but I must take the liberty of being ashamed for him.

I MUST call a halt somewhere, but there is one more match that must be mentioned, a match not between men, but between ladies, the final of the Ladies' Championship, at Troon, in 1925, between Miss Joyce Wethered and Miss Cecil Leitch. It contained every possible dramatic element except the international one. It was perhaps as well that this was absent. As it was, the crowd was so great and so much excited that the player had scarcely finished her stroke when she was swallowed up in a hot, seething mass of humanity.

From the very beginning of the Championship this match had been anticipated. Miss Leitch had been for a long time the undisputed queen of golf, but then an even greater than she had arisen in Miss Wethered. She in her turn had reigned since their meeting at Prince's in 1922. Now that Miss Wethered was in one half of the draw and Miss Leitch in the other, there was a chance of another final between them. Both parties have the power of inspiring almost fanatical enthusiasm among their supporters, and excitement was at boiling-point. Yet on the eve of the final it was difficult to imagine that the match would really be a match at all. Miss Wethered's progress had been a series of executions carried out with merciful swiftness. Round after round she had clung to an average of fours on this long and testing course. Miss Glenna Collett, the American champion, and a very fine player, had held her for a while, but in the end had been overwhelmed like the others by that remorseless accuracy. Miss Leitch, on the other hand, had not been herself at all. She had never touched her proper form, she had only got through by her great powers of fighting and because some of her opponents had been so terrified at the chance of beating her that they could not take what the gods gave them; she had appeared ill at ease and anxious, always brave but never confident.

And then on the morrow all was changed and a new Miss Leitch appeared, calm and serene, having reached the place that she had set out to reach.

She was ready to do battle for her life, and she did it so magnificently that, though in the end she lost the match, it was she rather than her conqueror that was the heroine of the day. Everybody knew that she would rise to the occasion and make a great effort, but hardly anyone, I think, expected quite such a great one.

From the very beginning of that match Miss Leitch played like her best self, confidently and boldly. As for Miss Wethered, though she did not wilt under the fierce attack, something of the divine fire had temporarily departed, and so, at the end of ten holes, we were faced with the almost incredible situation that Miss Wethered was three down. Then, however, she made her great push. She played grandly, and finally holed a long putt on the home green, to be home in thirty-five and square the match. Miss Leitch had never weakened for a single moment: she had played as well as ever and had given no openings. To lose three holes to such golf was almost inevitable, and probably any other lady golfer would have lost several more.

THEY were at it hammer and tongs again after luncheon, with the same fine golf. Any notion of Miss Wethered's going right away had long since been dispelled. Going to the ninth hole she was one down, and there came one of the crises of the match. Miss Wethered had a putt for the hole, but she was stymied. To go for the shot and knock her enemy's ball in would be to be two down, and that would be a very serious situation indeed. To go for it and bring it off would mean not only the gain of a valuable hole but would almost inevitably have a moral effect. She took the brave risk, lofted the shot perfectly, won the hole, and squared the match. The moral effect was palpable enough. For the next six holes Miss Wethered dominated the play. She was two up with three to go; if she could put a fairly long iron shot on to the sixteenth green she would in all human probability win the match by three and two. This was the type of shot that she had been playing better, perhaps, than all the rest. Everyone had so intense a belief in her that even at this most critical moment hardly a soul doubted that she would put the ball bang in the middle of the green. For once, however, she was not straight, but hooked the ball into the rough mounds on the left of the green. The hole was halved and Miss Leitch was still alive.

Again the moral effect was obvious. Miss Wethered for once played two weak holes in succession, played them as if she was shaken and tired. Miss Leitch metaphorically leaped on her like a tigress and, aided at the last hole by a little of that fortune that aids the brave, most gloriously squared the match. And that ought to be the end of the story. A half was the right ending, and the greatest thirty-seventh hole in the world must have seemed a pity. However, they had to go on, someone had to win, and the someone was Miss Wethered, who laid a very long putt stone-dead at the thirty-seventh. It was a fine effort and deserved victory, but everyone who saw that match will always wish that there could for that year have been two queens on twin thrones of exactly equal splendour.

AT SEA

By

F. BRITTEN AUSTIN

Illustrated by
JOHN CAMPBELL

THE liner rose and fell evenly on the quiet black swell of the Indian Ocean, streaking a divergent greenish phosphorescence from her flanks. Captain Forsyth hummed happily—except in a fog, he never whistled while at sea—as he descended from the bridge and went along to his own quarters. It was a beautiful night, pleasantly cool after the tropic heat of the day. The barometer was nicely high and steady. The wireless weather reports were good. In a few minutes the second dinner-bugle would sound. All was well in Captain Forsyth's little sundered world.

He had half-finished dressing, was at the mirror reflecting a now congestedly red, good-humoured countenance, broad under his untidy grey hair, as he endeavoured for once to get a neat bow to his tie, when there was a tap at the door.

"Come in!" he shouted. He completed the delicate operation, swung round to see who it was. It was, most unusual at this hour of the evening, the purser—and it was a purser whose aspect was even more unusual; his plump rotundity of face deathly white, visibly trembling. "What's the trouble, Jervis?"

The purser mastered himself, wiped a brow that was beaded with moisture.

"Bad trouble, sir," he said, in a shaky voice. "There's been a murder on board."

"Good Lord!" The captain stared at him. "Murder? Another of those Lascar feuds, I suppose. Where's the first officer?"

"This isn't the first officer's job, sir—it's mine," replied the purser. "It's one of the passengers."

"What?" cried the captain, incredulously. "A *passenger?*" In all his long and variegated experience at sea the murder of a passenger was one of those things that—thank Heaven!—did not happen. "Who is it?"

"Man in number forty-three, sir, B deck, forward end—first-class passenger. His steward has just found him. He came and reported it to me."

Captain Forsyth forgot his rule. He whistled. The murder of a first-class passenger at sea meant, very plainly, trouble, heaps of trouble. Short of piling up the ship, there is nothing the directors of a respectable line hate quite so much as a scandal. He looked again at the purser. That officer seemed as though on very little provocation he would faint.

"I saw him, sir," he said, by way of explaining his shakiness. "It—it wasn't nice."

The captain went to a cupboard in the corner of the cabin, extracted a bottle and two glasses. His own hands were not so steady as they might have been.

"Have a peg," he remarked, pouring out a couple of drinks. "We shall both feel better."

The purser drank his peg, gratefully, at a gulp.

"Now, then," said the captain. "Tell me all about it. Who is the poor devil?"

"Here's the passenger list, sir," replied the purser, producing a folded sheet from his pocket and spreading it out. He indicated a name with a trembling finger. "Allan Sollas, he's described as. Age forty-three. Single. Bound for Bombay from London. It's a bad business, sir."

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"It is, most assuredly, a bad business," agreed the captain, grimly. "I don't want to get hung-up over a murder trial—nor you either. Get taken off the ship for a month or two, perhaps—while the lawyers make the most of it. Who did it?"

"I wish I knew, sir. There's not the slightest indication. The bedroom steward saw a trickle of blood under the door. It was fastened on the inside. He worked up the catch, went in and found him—lying across his bunk, with a knife sticking in him. He was like that when I saw him. D'you mind, sir?" he asked, as he helped himself to a little more neat whisky. The bottle clinked against the glass as he poured it out.

"But," said the captain, a sudden hope in his voice, "how do you know it's murder? You say the door was fastened on the inside. The man must have committed suicide."

"Hardly, sir. A man can't very well stick a knife in the middle of his own back. You'll see it for yourself, sir. I've left him just as he was—only we've put a basin to catch the drips from the bunk.

"Ugh!" ejaculated the captain. "That's quite enough!"

"Didn't want it to trickle under the door, sir, and alarm the passengers. They haven't an idea of it so far. And I've told the steward—it's Macey, a good, steady fellow—not to say a word to a soul. He's locked the door of the cabin, and he's just standing around with a swab handy in case any should——"

The captain held up his hand.

"I told you that was quite enough," he said, revulsion in his face. "It's bad enough to have to go and see it, without making it picturesque." He pulled on his gold-braided jacket. "Well, I suppose the sooner I get it over the better," he added. "I'm the coroner's jury on this ship. There's no help for it. We'll go and get the doctor."

The purser looked at him anxiously.

"Wouldn't it be better to wait a little, sir—until after the dinner-bugle! If the passengers see you and the doctor and me going along the corridor at this hour they'll think something has occurred—and it's just as well they shouldn't know anything about it—if we can manage it."

"Not much chance of keeping a thing like this quiet," said the captain. "But perhaps you're right. We don't want 'em all guessing at the criminal. We want to catch the brute first. Isn't there anything that gives a hint to him—nothing suspicious at all?"

"No, sir. Not the least. Cabin didn't seem to have been interfered with. The steward was up and down the corridor a little before. D'you mind if I sit down, sir? It's upset me properly."

THE captain nodded, lost in his own thought. He looked up after a moment, a perplexed furrow between his grey eyebrows.

"How the devil *are* we going to catch him, purser? When you think of it, it isn't so easy. It might be any one of the crew—any one of the eighty first-class passengers—any one (though not so likely) of the two hundred steerage people. It isn't difficult to go slipping along the corridors when everybody is changing for dinner." He also sat down in his pivot-chair, and the mirror reflected a countenance from which the ruddiness had departed. "Heaven knows, I'm pretty good at running a ship across the ocean—but I've never set up for being a detective."

"No, sir. Nor I," agreed the purser.

"Well, let's get busy with it, anyway," said the captain, a legitimate exasperation in his tone. "Let's try and get some idea to help us. We can't afford to waste time while we're waiting here. And that damned murderer is going to be caught, or my name's not Jim Forsyth! What sort of fellow was this chap?"

"Very quiet, sir. Asked for a table to himself. Didn't seem to mix with any of the other passengers at all. Never took part in the deck sports. Used to sit away by himself, and read all day. Well off, I should imagine. He paid for two berths to have the cabin to himself."

"H'm! That looks fishy," said the captain. "Or perhaps it doesn't. He may merely have disliked another fellow in with him. I can understand that. If I were a passenger, I'd pay extra for a cabin to myself, if I could afford it. Who's on either side of him?"

"No one in forty-one, sir—and that's the end cabin up that way. Number forty-five has old Mrs. Laverstoke—you know, sir—the funny old woman—the one who's always badgering the young officers on deck and wanting to give them tracts."

"I know, confound her!" agreed the captain, resentfully. "She grabbed me the other day—wanted to get me into an argument about Spiritualism."

"She's alone in her cabin, also," said the purser. "Her maid sleeps with Mrs. Waldron's maid in number ninety. I'm terrified of her getting to know of this. She'll raise Hades for everyone if she does. And she's bound to notice if number forty-three doesn't go in or out."

"She mustn't," said the captain. He thought for a moment. "What about sending a fellow in to make a leak in the

water-pipe while she's up on deck to-morrow —soak the cabin—and put her in a better one with abject apologies ? That settles her. But it doesn't help us. Old ladies of seventy don't usually go sticking knives into inoffensive gentlemen's backs. Who else is there ? "

" There's a couple of larky young lads in forty-seven, sir." He referred to his sheet. " Walter Osborn and Henry Mackwith Strong—aged twenty-four and twenty-five—lieutenants, both of them—Indian Army. It would be a safe bet that they were in the smoke-room when the murder was done. They are not teetotallers to the extent of missing their cocktails."

The captain nodded.

" Who else ? "

" Number forty-nine has Colonel and Mrs. Black, sir—they asked me if I couldn't move them a little farther from the young gentlemen in forty-seven. I can hardly see either of them doing it." He smiled wanly.

" Anyone else likely ? "

" Well, there's the whole ship to choose from, sir—and if you ask me, one is as likely as the other. I can't imagine any of them doing it."

" What about the crew? Those confounded Lascars slip along like ghosts."

" Quite, sir. It *may* be one of them. But Macey said he didn't see any of the crew—I asked him. He says that after putting out the dinner-clothes of his passengers he was standing with the stewardess—that's Mrs. Halkett, sir, you know—at the entrance to that corridor from the companion-staircase, and he swears that no one but passengers passed them. He would have stopped any of the crew, of course, and asked what he wanted."

" And the stewardess—what does she say ? "

" I haven't asked her, sir. No one knows anything about it except Macey and you and me—and the murderer himself, whoever he is."

" You haven't told the doctor ? "

" Not yet, sir. I thought it would be better to wait until the passengers were out of the way—and then perhaps he would go along with you. There's the dinner-call ! " he added, as the notes of a bugle came repeated from several quarters of the ship. " Give 'em ten minutes, sir, and the coast'll be clear."

The captain nodded.

" Yes. Run along and catch the doctor before he goes in to dinner, Jervis. Bring him up here. It's a business for both of us—and the more I think of it the more it looks like a damned bad business, too."

It was an excessively bad business. Left alone in his cabin, while the purser went to find the doctor, Captain Forsyth realized it with unpleasant vividness. How in the world was he going to detect a murderer out of eighty first-class passengers, let alone the steerage people and the crew ? It was like looking for a needle in a haystack—worse, for he hadn't an idea what kind of needle he sought. He glanced at the passenger list the purser had left spread out upon his table. That long column of names merely mocked him. Any one of them was as likely—or as unlikely—as another. And—good Lord !—the thought abruptly flashed into him—*in fourteen hours they would arrive at Bombay !* Once they touched port, good-bye to the last hope of catching the murderer. That was certain. *Fourteen hours !* Fourteen hours in which to find him !

NO one would have suspected from Captain Forsyth's manner, as—a little late—he entered the dining-saloon and took his place at the head of his table, the grim intensity of his secret thoughts. To perfection he played his habitual part of the jovially urbane skipper, an apt joke always ready for the ladies, a semi-facetious, semi-serious remark for the men. He even ate his dinner, though never in his life had he had less appetite for it. Altogether too recent was that nasty spectacle in the cabin which, with the doctor, the purser, and Macey, the steward, he had just visited. The unfortunate Mr. Allan Sollas lay stretched face-forward on his bunk, a large knife in the middle of his back. The steward identified that knife as the murdered man's own property. It was a large hunting-knife that lay habitually on his table, and he used it for the purpose of cutting the pages of the books he read. Evidently he had met his death in the act of dressing for dinner ; he had donned his black trousers and his white shirt, while his waistcoat and dinner-jacket were spread out on the settee. The doctor diagnosed that, at that moment, he had been dead rather less than an hour. There was no indication of struggle in the cabin. The victim's baggage stood open, but with no signs of interference. The steward stated the circumstances of his discovery of the crime, and reiterated that the door was fastened on the inside. He had had to jerk up the catch with the thin instrument he carried in case sick passengers should ring for assistance with the door buttoned within. No one could re-fasten the door in that manner from without. *Then how had the murderer left the cabin ?* All four had instinctively glanced to the

porthole. It was open, but with the windscuttle—which made the most of the breeze—still fixed in position. "He'd have to be pretty thin and pretty nimble to get out of there, sir," the steward had said, and plainly the steward was right. In addition, the steward stated that he had found the electric-light switched off when he had entered the cabin. And that seemed to be everything that—for the moment—could be established.

All this Captain Forsyth exasperatedly turned over in the back of his brain while he fulfilled his duty and made himself amiable to the passengers at his table. He had twenty of them, the rest being split up among the tables of the senior officers, save a few at small tables by themselves. One of these apparently quite normal people in evening dress was—almost certainly—the murderer. Which?

To-night (he felt the irony of it) all the passengers were rather more cheery than usual. It was a special farewell dinner for the last night before Bombay, where many would disembark. From all over the saloon came the popping of corks and bursts of laughter as another good story was told. Presently there would be dancing under the coloured lamps of the promenade-deck—would be the final flirtations in dark corners. It seemed incredible that any of these people could, an hour back, have stabbed a man to death. In that thought he glimpsed the possibility of a clue. Perhaps the murderer hadn't had nerve enough to come down to dinner? He took a pencil from his pocket, wrote on a corner of the menu-card "Anybody missing?" folded it up, scribbled "Purser" upon it, gave it to the steward.

In a moment or two the answer came back.

"All here."

IT was an hour later. The captain's cabin was somewhat crowded with himself, the doctor, and the purser. Outside the door, Macey the steward waited in case they should have any more questions. From the deck below came the music of a jazz-band. Captain Forsyth leaned back in his pivot-chair, and frowned as he puffed at his pipe. He gestured to a small heap of papers on his table.

"Nothing much there. Just the ordinary stuff the ordinary man carries about with him, except for the automatic in the suitcase which had not been fired. Nothing unusual in carrying that when going out East. I gather that Mr. Allan Sollas was bound to Bombay on business of some sort not specified. He seems to have been a wealthy man. There's that thousand pounds in notes, in addition to his letter of credit and a wad of traveller's cheques, besides twenty pounds loose on his table—poor men don't carry around sums like that. Evidently robbery wasn't the motive. The twenty pounds were plainly in sight, and we found that fat packet of the thousand almost as soon as we looked in his suitcase."

"I can't imagine why he didn't hand them in to me for safe custody," interposed the purser. "It's madness keeping money like that in one's cabin."

"Quite," agreed the captain. "It's a point. But I don't see that it gets us anywhere. All it tells us is that robbery was not the motive for his death."

He sat sucking at his pipe, frowning at the clouds of smoke he blew from his mouth.

"Gentlemen," he said, "in a little more than twelve hours we arrive at Bombay. Once we touch land, the murderer will be off and away. It isn't going to happen if I can help it. So just use your wits a little, both of you, and see if you can't suggest something useful."

"We certainly can't have all the passengers up one by one and interrogate them," said the doctor. "The whole ship would be in a buzz with it in five minutes, and the murderer—whoever he is—would have plenty of warning to prepare himself for being questioned."

"Quite impossible," said the captain. "I want to come alongside the dock tomorrow with the murderer safely under lock and key—and not a soul on the ship the wiser. And—by the Lord—somehow—I will!"

"Splendid, captain!" smiled the doctor. "But how are we going even to start looking for the gentleman? It's a job for a Sherlock Holmes—and I think even Mr. Holmes would be hard put to it to pick out the murderer from this ship's company now so cheerfully dancing on the deck. There's not a hint of a clue."

"There's the knife," said the captain. He jerked his hand to where the large hunting-knife lay on his table. "You are sure there are no finger-prints on it?"

"If there are, I can't see them," replied the doctor. "And I've done my best to find them. Of course, I have no proper apparatus. On the other hand, it is possible that the murderer wore rubber gloves."

"H'm!" the captain grunted disgustedly. "Well, for Heaven's sake, suggest something. You two are supposed to be the clever ones on this ship. I'm only just a simple sailor-man—just someone for the owners to kick. What's the first move?"

"I'm hanged if I know," said the doctor. "Unless we go down and have another

He took a pencil from his pocket, wrote on a corner of the menu-card "Anybody missing?" folded it up, scribbled "Purser" upon it, gave it to the steward.

search in that cabin—on the chance that we've overlooked something."

The captain shook his head.

"No," he said. "We did that pretty thoroughly. I've got a fairly sharp eye for detail in an inspection, and I'm prepared to swear we didn't miss anything. It's just wasting time to go down there again—besides being confoundedly unpleasant." He shuddered at the thought of it, poured himself out another drink, pushed the bottle towards the other two.

For a few minutes there was silence while the three men sat and smoked, their brows corrugated with thought.

"You can't suggest anything?" said the captain, at last. "Well, Heaven knows, I don't set up as a sleuth, but I've the glimmering of an idea. We must work on some hypothesis—and so we will assume that the murderer is a first-class passenger who killed Mr. Sollas from a motive of revenge. Do you agree?"

"Fire away, captain," said the doctor. "All things considered, that seems the most probable."

"Very good. Now, of course, it is just possible that the murderer met his enemy on this ship quite by chance, with no previous idea that he was also on board. Possible—but it involves a coincidence, and coincidences are mathematical improbabilities, if I remember rightly. We will commence at the simplest—and we will assume that the murderer *did* know his intended victim was on board, that he came also for the specific purpose of killing him, and that he proposed to commit the crime just before arriving at Bombay—naturally enough, so that there might be the shortest possible time between the event and his escape."

"One would have thought he'd have done it during the night, in that case, sir," said the purser, critically.

"Quite. But for some reason of his own, he didn't. He chose the time just before dinner," replied the captain, somewhat snappily. "Don't let's confuse this. Do you agree that there's something in what I've said?"

"Undoubtedly," concurred the doctor.

"Then, purser," said the captain, "just look out from your list there all the passengers who booked for Bombay—*and booked after Mr. Sollas booked his passage.*"

"Splendid," said the doctor. "You've hit an idea."

The purser reached for his lists. "That's fairly easy, sir," he said. "Mr. Sollas booked his passage rather late—a week before sailing. The only other people who booked to Bombay after him are"—he ran his finger down the columns—"Mr. Osborn and Mr. Strong, the two young subalterns next door but one to him—they had a last minute extension of leave, they told me, and transferred from a B.I. boat—Miss Brandon, that's the little spinster lady who's going out as a governess—Mr. Johnston, he's on the other side, number sixty-eight, the clergyman, sir—if he got out of that porthole it must have been a tight fit, and I can't quite see him climbing up a rope to the deck, or however the fellow managed it." The purser smiled at the thought, despite the seriousness of the subject. The Rev. Mr. Johnston weighed at least eighteen stone in his socks. "And that's all, sir."

"They certainly don't sound very probable, any of them," murmured the doctor. "What do you think, captain?"

CAPTAIN FORSYTH frowned irritably. He had absurdly hoped his flash of deductive genius would have revealed some name that was plainly self-evident as the possible criminal.

"We'll have those young subalterns up, anyway," he said. "Who knows? This Mr. Sollas may be a moneylender who had one of them in his clutches. Call Macey in."

The purser went to the door, brought the steward into the cabin.

"Find Mr. Osborn, steward," ordered the captain. "Give him my compliments, and ask him if he would step up here for a moment. Say nothing to anyone else."

"Very good, sir." The man departed, and the three sat and waited.

"We'll just cover all this up," said the captain, after a while, putting an outspread chart over the knife and the heap of the murdered man's papers. "No sense in giving our hand away."

There was a tap at the door, and the steward opened it at the captain's shouted "Come in!" The sound of jazz-music entered with him.

"Mr. Osborn, sir," he said.

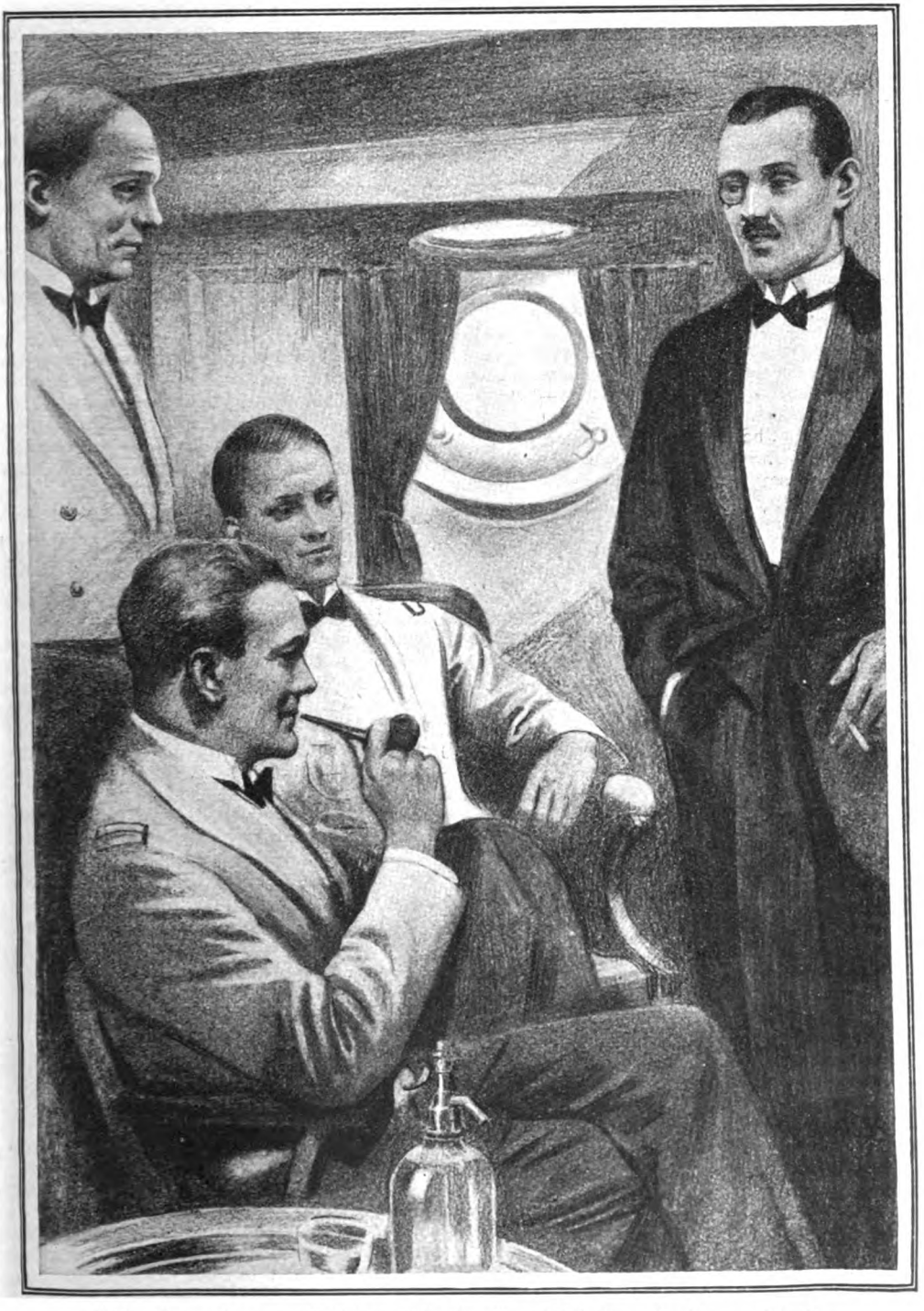
The young man, tall, good-looking in an open, honest freshness of countenance, neat in his evening clothes, stepped over the sill of the door. He was evidently in high spirits.

"Good evening, captain," he said, cheerily. "You've ruined me with the prettiest girl on the ship—I broke off a dance to obey your command."

Captain Forsyth looked at him shrewdly, despite his urbane smile.

"Much obliged to you, Mr. Osborn. Have a drink." He pushed the whisky, the siphon, and a glass towards him.

"I don't mind if I do, sir, thank you," said the young man, helping himself. He glanced round at the doctor and purser.



"Good evening, captain," he said, cheerily. "You've ruined me with the prettiest girl on the ship—I broke off a dance to obey your command."

" This is where you are hiding yourselves, is it ? " he accused them, with a laugh. " The ladies are sending out search-parties for you."

Certainly, this bright young man did not look like a murderer—still, one never knew. Captain Forsyth relit his pipe as a preliminary to questioning him.

" I asked you to come up, Mr. Osborn," he said, putting down his match, " because I thought you might possibly be able to help me. You know Mr. Sollas ? "

The young man paused with the glass in his hand.

" Never heard of him, captain."

" He had the cabin next but one to you, sir," said the purser. " Number forty-three."

" Oh, yes—you mean ' the melancholy crow '—the solitary bird ? Yes—I know him—by sight. What about him ? Don't tell me he's Charlie Chaplin in disguise ! "

" No." The captain hesitated. ' What should he say ? " The fact is, Mr. Sollas has been stricken down with a most dangerous and—er—infectious disease "—he glanced at the young man to see whether he was affected by this possibly embarrassing intelligence ; plainly, he was not—" and he is now in the sick-bay, I regret to say, delirious. We have been trying to find out a little about him so as to wireless his relatives, and it occurred to us that, as you were his neighbour, you might have a little information ? "

" I'm sorry, captain, but I never spoke to him in my life."

" Do you know anyone on board who did talk to him ? "

" No. I can't say I do. That's why Strong and I christened him ' the crow '—because he always sat away alone. We often remarked that we had never seen him exchange a word with anyone except the steward."

" H'm ! One more question, Mr. Osborn. By an extraordinary coincidence, someone—probably one of the Lascars—broke into Mr. Sollas's room to-night and—er—committed a robbery. It must have happened in the hour before dinner. You don't happen to have seen anyone in the corridor, I suppose ? "

" No, I didn't. As a matter of fact, Strong and I weren't about just then. We dressed early, at six o'clock, after a go of deck-tennis, and we were in the smoke-room having a cocktail and a yarn with old Johnston—the padre, you know—until a quarter of an hour after the bugle went."

" I see." The captain nodded at him. " Thank you very much, Mr. Osborn. I'm sorry to have spoilt your dance. I hope your partner will not be too angry with me for having kept you away so long. And I need hardly say that I rely on you to say nothing of this to her or to anyone else. We are taking every precaution, of course, but passengers get very panicky when it's a question of infectious disease, you know. Besides, there's the question of quarantine," he added, as this logical corollary to his untruth suddenly occurred to him. " We might not be able to avoid it, if this gets talked about. Keep all I have said to yourself, will you ? "

" Certainly, captain. Naturally. Is that all you want me for ? "

" That's all, Mr. Osborn, thank you. Good night."

WHEN the young man had departed, the three sat and looked at each other.

" So that's that," commented the captain. " A perfect alibi for all three men—for I've no doubt that if we ask the barsteward he will confirm it. Anyway, I feel sure young Osborn didn't do it."

" That leaves only Miss—Miss——" said the doctor.

" Little Miss Brandon, doctor," the purser put in. " And it happens that I've got an alibi for her also. I personally saw her playing bridge in the lounge at half-past six, again at seven, and again just as I was coming up to the captain's room to tell him about the murder. I don't think she interrupted her game of bridge to slip down and murder Mr. Sollas, wriggle out of the porthole and climb up on deck again, and then sit down as if nothing had happened."

" Hardly," growled the captain, biting on his pipe-stem. " That eliminates her."

" It also completes the elimination of all the people who booked for Bombay *after* the murdered man," said the doctor. " I'm afraid your idea has broken down, captain."

" Rather more than twenty booked for Bombay before him," remarked the purser, looking at his list. " We can't very well have them all up here without causing a lot of talk."

" Confound it ! " said the captain. " We're as far off as ever ! "

At that moment there was a tap on the door. It opened and young Osborn put his head in.

" It has just occurred to me, purser," he said, " that you ought to disinfect your assistant if this fellow—what's his name—has anything really catching. Just before six o'clock to-night I went to your office to get my wallet out for to-morrow—and your Mr. Sollas came up to cash a cheque as I went away. I left him there talking to your chap. I thought I'd just speak of it, in case you didn't know—you weren't there at the moment."

"Thank you, Mr. Osborn, I didn't know," said the purser. "I'll see to it. I *didn't* know," he added, to the captain, after Osborn had again disappeared. "I wonder what he wanted to cash a cheque for, with all that money in his cabin? There are twenty fivers among his big notes." He went to the door, told the steward to find the assistant purser and bring him along. "We'll just look into this," he said as he returned.

"Certainly odd," commented the doctor. "The whole thing's odd. The more I think of it, the more it seems to me that the only thing to do is to hold up all the passengers while the Indian police photograph the finger-prints that may after all be on that knife-hilt—though I'm hanged if I can see any—and then make every soul on the ship register his or her finger-prints for comparison."

"If it comes to it, we shall have to do that," growled the captain. "But not if I can help it."

When the assistant purser arrived he stated that he had indeed cashed a "traveller's cheque" for twenty pounds for Mr. Sollas that evening. Mr. Sollas had stated that he wanted the money for his wine-bill, the tips to the steward, and to get off the ship with to-morrow. He had said that he made a habit of never carrying cash with him.

"*What?*" exclaimed the captain, incredulously. "What did he say?"

"He said that he made a rule never to have more than five pounds in cash with him because once he had had his pocket picked, sir. I told him it was a very good rule."

"Did he say anything else?"

"No, sir—only that he should be very glad to get off the ship. He's a strange sort of chap, sir. I haven't seen him speak a word to anyone on board. There's not a soul he'll have to say good-bye to when he gets off to-morrow."

"Quite, quite," said the captain, irritably cutting him short. "That'll do, thank you, Mr. Morris. Good night."

WHEN the assistant purser had closed the door after him, the captain looked at his companions.

"Strange, isn't it? Call the steward in again, purser."

Macey stood once more in the cabin. The captain interrogated him.

"Steward—we're wondering about all that money in Mr. Sollas's cabin. Did you ever see any there—did he ever leave any lying about?"

"No, sir. Never. I've been thinking about that money myself, sir—and it's very queer. Mr. Sollas asked me to re-pack his trunk and his suit-case, sir—all ready for to-morrow morning. He left everything open. And I didn't see any money at all. He came in to dress just as I was finishing, and he must have taken some out of his pocket—that would be the twenty pounds on his table, sir. But that fat wad of notes wasn't in his suit-case when I left him, sir, at about six-thirty—I'm sure of that. The more I think of it, the more sure I am."

"Thank you, steward," said the captain. "All right. Wait outside in case I want you again." The steward went out and Captain Forsyth blew heavily. "This beats cock-fighting," he said. "If the steward is right, then we have a murderer who not only comes in through the side of the ship and goes out again the same way—I defy anyone to climb out of a porthole with the wind-scuttle up—but leaves a present of a thousand pounds in cash for his victim!"

"That gives us a clue, though. Those notes have numbers and can be traced. The wads have evidently come straight from a bank. The bank can tell us who received them."

"That's true, doctor—but how long will they be about it?"

"Wireless, sir?" suggested the purser, tentatively. He glanced at the clock on the cabin wall. "It's now half-past nine—that's about three o'clock in the morning in England. Not much use trying to get on to a bank at that hour, I'm afraid. We shall be at Bombay before we get a reply."

"Wait a bit," said the captain, tapping his teeth with his pipe-stem. "People don't usually carry around that amount of notes. Supposing these are stolen—supposing we have the thief on board—what then? If we can spot him, we've got the murderer! There's surely someone on duty all night at Scotland Yard."

"It sounds a bit far-fetched——" began the doctor, dubitatively.

"We can but try," said the captain. "Take the numbers of those notes, purser, and send off a message to Scotland Yard. Ask if they are known, and tell them a reply is urgently required. Tell them to wireless a description of any individual who may be wanted in connection with them. Mark it 'Priority' at special rates. At this hour of the night we ought to get an answer under the hour."

The purser took a telegram-form from the captain's desk and wrote out the message. "We're well in touch with the shore-station," he said, as he rose to take it to the wireless-room. "They'll get this in London inside ten minutes."

Half an hour or so later there was a tap at the door. It was the junior wireless-operator.

"Message, sir," he said.

The captain took it, tore open the envelope, stared at the contents.

"Here we are!" he exclaimed. "Listen to this! '*Notes part of missing proceeds of robbery committed by bank-clerk Lawson sentenced nine months back to five years' penal servitude.*' That doesn't help us much," he added. "The fellow's in jail. But—how in the name of all that's wonderful did those notes get into that cabin between six-thirty and seven-thirty to-night?"

"Put there by the fellow who did the murder, evidently," said the doctor.

"By Mr. Lawson himself, I suppose?" replied the captain, scornfully. "He just willed himself all the way from Dartmoor and back again!" He was furious in his disappointment.

"No, captain, but by somebody on the ship who knew Lawson—or who was connected with the robbery in some way."

"It looks as if this Mr. Sollas must have been connected with it," remarked the purser. "Otherwise, why give him this precise wad of notes?"

"Well, we can't question *him!*" said the captain, irritably. "And this message gives us no clue at all. We might almost as well never have received it."

"It'll help the Indian police, though," mused the doctor. "That's something."

The captain flared out at him.

"The Indian police are not going to come into this if I can help it. I'm not going to get held up at Bombay for a month of Sundays. We've got—somehow—somehow—to discover this murderer to-night. So, for Heaven's sake, try to use what brains you've got, both of you!"

He sat back, frowning savagely, filling the cabin with tobacco-smoke. There was a prolonged silence, in which the doctor and purser glanced at each other sympathetically. Suddenly the captain leaned forward.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed. "We were on the wrong track when we looked for someone who had booked to *Bombay* after this fellow Sollas! If I had committed a murder just before reaching a port, I shouldn't get off the ship. I should be sure that the police would be checking up everyone who disembarked. If I had succeeded in avoiding suspicion up to then *I should stick to the ship as long as I could!* Isn't that common sense? Everyone would be off on a false trail. By the time I landed, thousands of miles off, I should be forgotten—or, if not, it would be difficult to track me. By Jove, doctor—don't say I'm no Sherlock Holmes! Purser, just look up who it was that booked the *farthest* passage after Mr. Sollas had booked his—and, man, woman, or child, by the Lord, I'll have 'em up here!"

The purser consulted his list.

"The passenger—booked to Singapore—on the thirteenth, the day after Mr. Sollas booked—is old Mrs. Laverstoke, sir."

The doctor burst into a shout of laughter.

"You're surely not going to get the old dame up here at this time of night, captain! She'll break her neck climbing the bridge-stair. You'll never hear the last of it. She's just the sort that writes outraged letters to the directors, and requests that the captain should be sacked at once or she'll have a question asked in Parliament. This is getting comic. Old ladies of seventy—and she's that if she's a day, for all her paint—don't usually climb in and out of portholes."

Captain Forsyth looked almost sheepish. This was distinctly unexpected. He set his square jaw, and ran his fingers through his thin grey hair, frowning hard.

"I don't care," he said, stubbornly. "When Jim Forsyth swears an oath, he keeps it. I swore I'd have up the person who had booked farthest—and, by the Lord, I will—so much the worse for old Mrs. Laverstoke, but it can't be helped."

"There's the maid as well, sir," put in the purser. "Both booked to Singapore."

"Very well," said the captain, desperately sticking to the letter of his vow. "We'll have 'em both up. Tell the steward to fetch 'em. Get 'em up out of bed, if necessary. But the old hag usually stays around until eleven o'clock—I've seen her every night in the lounge, confound her!"

"You'll never hear the last of it, captain," the doctor warned him, seriously. "What on earth are you going to say to her when she gets here? It's a difficult place for an old lady to get to in the dark, remember."

The captain shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know what I'm going to say. But I'm going to get her here—the maid as well—both of 'em. Tell the steward, purser!" He reiterated his order in a sharp tone, as the purser lingered, evident disapproval on his face. This was asking for trouble with a vengeance.

THE minutes prolonged themselves. Down below the jazz-band still continued to make music for couples who danced and couples who flirted under the stars. It was difficult to believe that this ship, speeding with melody through the night, held a murdered man and a murderer.

The doctor rose politely as, wrapped around with a cloak, her white-faced maid behind her, the old lady came

clumsily, fussily, into the cabin. He had never liked her—he never liked old women who painted and raddled themselves up as this old woman did, her face grotesque in its excessive colour under a grey wig that was certainly false. He would risk a wager that she was nearly bald under it.

The captain had risen also, was now smiling in his most pleasant dining-saloon manner.

"You know, this is splendid of you, Mrs. Laverstoke!" he exclaimed, heartily. "And I knew you would! The doctor and the purser here both owe me a pound—I shall have to go halves with you." He laughed, a little too boisterously. "We were talking of the girls of this generation and the last, and I stuck to it that the girls of my generation—I hope you don't mind my calling you that, though it's a libel on your age—were even yet the equals of any girl of to-day. I instanced you—cheek, what?—and they bet me you wouldn't come up here at this time of night and drink a whisky-and-soda with me as half-a-dozen of our young friends on deck would if I'd only invite 'em. I barred the whisky-and-soda—unless you'd like one—and bet that you would. And here you are! Splendid! What about that, doc? Do sit down, Mrs. Laverstoke, now we've got you here!"

The old woman was obviously out of breath as she stood leaning on her ebony stick. She looked at him as though wondering whether he were drunk—and, indeed, his nervously-forced joviality gave ground for the suspicion. Still panting, she seated herself on the chair he indicated to her, smoothed out her lavender satin evening dress. Behind her, the white-faced, dark-haired maid stood silent. The doctor wondered how much the old woman tyrannized over the poor thing.

Mrs. Laverstoke found her breath and her high-pitched quavery, unpleasant voice. It was evident that she did not appreciate the captain's high spirits.

"In that case, captain, I think you might have sent me the correct message. The steward told me that you wished to see me and my maid at once on most urgent business."

The captain looked rather staggered. He had not taken into account what the steward might have said to get them there.

"Quite. Quite," he said. "In fact, there is a rather important thing I had to discuss with you—but I was coming down to see you about that. The fact is—er—your next-door cabin-companion has had to be removed to sick-bay—suffering from, I regret to say," the captain recovered his aplomb, "a most deadly disease."

The old woman stared at him sharply.

"And what has that to do with me, captain, pray?"

"Merely that I think—the doctor thinks—it would be safer if you removed to another cabin. More pleasant, at any rate, for you. It's not nice, having that sort of thing next door."

Again the old woman looked sharply at him, unpleasantly.

"This is not another of your little jokes, captain? You have no bet about it?"

"Not in the least, my dear lady, I assure you. It's—er—unfortunately a fact. Did you happen to know Mr. Sollas?"

"I believe I have passed him once or twice in the corridor and on the deck," said the old lady, stiffly. "And I have heard him snore."

"A bad habit—a bad habit," said the captain. "But I don't think you'll hear him snore any more on this trip. Well, now, since I have brought you all the way up here, is there anything I can offer you? The purser will get you a liqueur up from the bar in a moment—won't you, purser?"

"Nothing, thank you." She declined with a dignity that froze.

"Not even a cigarette?"

"Thank you. My generation has never smoked." She was crushing.

THE captain seemed about to add something else, but refrained. He looked at her quizzically. It wanted more than a cantankerous old woman to abash him.

"Well," he said, "I admit to it. I smoke all day. It's a good conscience, I suppose. I never knew a man with a bad conscience who could smoke with satisfaction to himself."

"You are fortunate," she commented, acidly. Her crow's-footed old eyes puckered up at him.

"Yes," continued the captain, seating himself on the edge of his table, and laughing boisterously like the great schoolboy he sometimes—for the benefit of passengers—pretended to be, "it's a splendid thing to have a good conscience—splendid! One's afraid of nothing in the world then. Nothing to jump out suddenly at one. No little murders to prevent one sleeping at night. By the way," he changed his tone suddenly to one of semi-seriousness, "have you ever seen a weapon with which a murder was committed, Mrs. Laverstoke?"

She frowned at him.

"I cannot say that I have," she said.

"Well, here you are, then! Catch!" He whipped from under the chart the hunting-knife it concealed, tossed it towards her lap.

The old woman made a quick, instinctive movement of her knees, and the weapon fell to the floor. She stared at it for a second, and started up—in genuine horror—from her seat.

"Captain Forsyth, if you have quite finished your little jests, I will retire. And, it is but just to warn you, I propose to write to your directors. I feel sure they will be interested to know that one at least of their captains fails to remain sober when at sea."

She moved with dignity towards the door, passing him. The captain laughed foolishly. Was he indeed drunk? The doctor was embarrassed for him.

"I *was* at sea—all at sea, Mrs. Laverstoke, but I'm not so much at sea now—permit me," he lurched towards her, "your wig does not fit very well!"

"Sir!"

Simultaneous with the outraged ejaculation, the grey fluffy wig was in the captain's hand, and before him stood—now plainly travestied in woman's clothes, his face grotesque in its paint—a quite young man with neatly-smoothed-down fair hair! The girl at the door uttered a sharp little cry, turned to dash out.

"Hold her, purser!" The captain looked to see that the purser had her fast, turned again to the young man. "Out with it!" he said, sharply. "Why did you murder the man Sollas?"

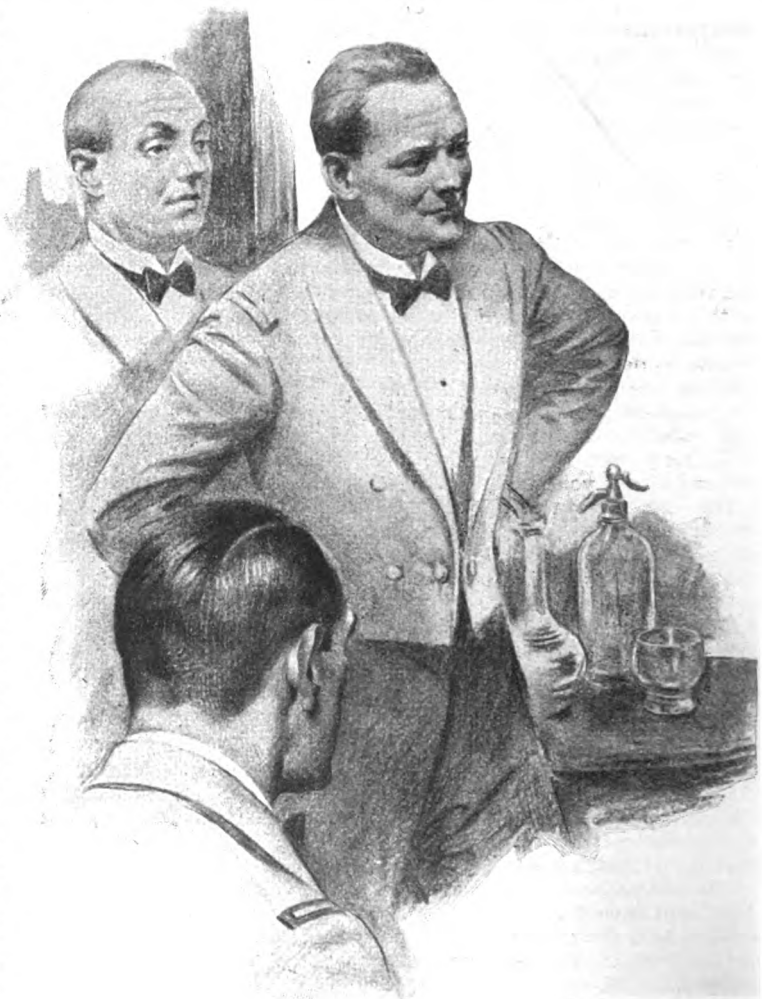
The young man glared at him, ludicrous in his get-up. It was impossible to be dignified in such circumstances.

"I don't know what you're talking about!"

"You don't—don't you? Then answer this. What relation are you to the man Lawson, now doing time for a bank robbery?"

The young fellow stared incredulously, and then shrugged his shoulders under the absurd feminine cloak.

"That's pretty good," he said, coolly. "All right. I don't know how you found



out, but you've got me. But *she*"—he indicated the girl in the purser's grasp—"knew nothing about—the killing. She's my sister. Lawson's wife."

"I see," said the captain. "And where did Sollas come in?"

"He's a crook. One of the flash gang. He planned the bank robbery and worked

a frame-up on my brother-in-law. He wanted him in jail."

"Why?"

"Lawson's sister. My brother-in-law kept too sharp an eye on her while I was away. She was engaged to me. The only thing in the world that kept me straight. That blackguard got hold of her. She—committed suicide—six months after."

"And the notes?"

"A share of the swag Sollas—Marshall is his real name—planted on Lawson's sister so as to terrorize her. She sent them to me—just before turning on the gas. I kept 'em to give back to him, with interest."

"What were you all doing on this ship?"

"Marshall was dodging me—he knew I was out for his blood. He thought he'd give me the slip in India—also, he wasn't too popular with the police at home—it was time he tried a fresh climate. I happened to spot him go to the steamship office, and next day I booked the berth next to his. I took my sister because she was alone in the world except for me. We planned to go on from Singapore to some South Sea island—start fresh and make a home for my brother-in-law when he came out. Marshall had never set eyes on her—and I saw to it he didn't recognize me."

"This is not another of your little jokes, captain?" she asked. "You have no bet about it?"

"A very creditable disguise, if I may say so, Mr.—Mr.——"

"Somers, my name is. Albert Somers."

"Well, Mr. Somers, I haven't the slightest doubt how you got into Mr. Marshall's cabin to-night—you merely tapped at the door and, thinking it was the steward, he opened to you. I can guess also why you didn't go in the middle of the night. You surmised he might be a light sleeper, and have an automatic under his pillow. But I'm curious to know how you fastened the door on the inside after you had gone out."

The young man grinned.

"I thought that would puzzle you. I had a bit of wire to throw the latch up, if he didn't open. Afterwards, I thought it would be just as well to latch the door. I wish I'd thought of it first—I should have stabbed him in front, and it would have passed for certain suicide. Particularly as I used his own knife—I saw it on the table as he turned to get me the box of matches I asked for. I only thought of the door afterwards."

"These second thoughts that come too late!" commented the captain, grimly. "But I still don't know how you did it."

"Quite easy. It just meant hooking the wire over the metal button, passing it through the crack of the door, and giving it a jerk. It's a big button and not stiff. Nothing to it."

"Professional, I see?" smiled the captain.

"If you like, sir. Both ways. Small part on the stage once. But I've chucked the lock-picking game. Uncle in Australia died and left us a bit. We shouldn't have been able to afford this trip otherwise—we couldn't risk trying to pass those notes."

"I'm afraid it's a trip with a bad ending, Mr. Somers. As I told you when you came in, I shall have to change your cabin. Doctor, would you mind fetching the first officer?"

The young man shrugged his shoulders.

"It's a neat cop," he said, after the doctor had gone. "Scotland Yard couldn't have done it better, captain. And how you spotted it beats me. Could you spare me a drink?" He looked longingly at the bottle. "I'm a bit—knocked."

"Certainly." The captain poured out a whisky-and-soda, handed it to him.

"Thanks, captain—you're a sport!" said the young man as he took the glass.

The next instant he had hurled it full in the captain's face, had switched out the light. There was a sudden rush, a shout from the purser, a cry from the girl. When Captain Forsyth had wiped the fluid from his eyes and found the switch, the young man had disappeared. He had been too quick even for the steward outside. Macey had only a fragment of the lavender satin dress to show, snatched as the murderer leaped overboard.

A LITTLE later the captain and the doctor sat over another drink and a recapitulatory discussion.

"Very smart of you, captain," said the doctor. "He quite took me in. How did you tumble to it?"

"I don't know. It occurred to me—when I was desperate at the thought of that woman coming up; more hope than anything—that just possibly she might be a man. It's a most effective disguise to make up as an old woman—I did it once myself in some theatricals when I was young—particularly an old woman who paints herself up. I knew I was for trouble anyway if the old woman was genuine. So I thought I'd test her. She gave herself away when she said she didn't smoke, and I could see a cigarette stain between her fingers. And I could see her getting uneasy when I started ragging about 'conscience' and 'murders.' Then I tried the little dodge with the knife—threw it—and 'she' put her legs together like a man does, instead of apart like a woman. Also he jumped with more than normal horror at the touch of the weapon with that blood still on the blade. So there it was. I just pulled his wig off."

"You weren't quite so clever at the last, though, captain."

"No," agreed Captain Forsyth. "But perhaps it's just as well. I'll get you and the purser to countersign the affidavit for the directors. I don't think they'll mind."

Bertie Trails the Herring

By

ANTHONY PARSONS

Illustrated by
REGINALD CLEAVER

"WHAT did I tell you, eh?" exploded Henry Smitheson, triumphantly. "Didn't I tell you he'd buy it?" He closed the office door and came close to the cashier. "I knew she was the right sort for him. I told you she'd bleed him dry!"

"You did, Henry," agreed the little cashier in a somewhat preoccupied voice. "You did." And a moment later: "I suppose this is all right?"

"All right?" repeated Henry, staring from the cashier's outstretched finger to the still wet cheque for three thousand pounds lying on the blotting-pad. "What d'you mean—all right?"

"Well, it's a lot more than he's done with us before"—the other's voice was vaguely apologetic—"and it's Saturday morning and the bank closed——"

"Cha!" The manager of the famous Bond Street jewellers, North and North, clapped the cashier on the shoulder. "Safe as the Bank of England," he laughed. He opened the office door and walked out into the shop. Hesitated for a moment. Turned back. "What the dickens made you think of that, Greenwait?" he asked, curiously.

The cashier was still more apologetic. He was an apologetic kind of man.

"I dunno! Just struck me"—he broke off as the telephone bell gave a sharp ring. "Hullo? Yes. North and North. Who? Rosenbaum? Oh, yes. What? Wh-what's that? But we've only just this minute sold them. No, of course not! Here, hold on a minute."

"What's the matter?" The fragmentary conversation had taken some of the colour from Henry's cheeks. "What's the matter?" as the cashier covered up the mouthpiece with his hand.

"It's Rosenbaum, the pawnbroker, on the 'phone. He's ringing up about a string of pearls in a case bearing our name. They've just been pawned."

"What?" The word ripped from Henry's lips as he snatched the receiver from the other's limp fingers. "Hullo? Yes, Henry Smitheson speaking. When? Twenty minutes ago? Yes, just taken them from here! But, good God, man! No, of course we can't. The bank's closed. Yes—yes, I will—yes, right away!" He crashed the receiver back on to its hook and for a second stood staring straight in front of him. "My God!" he half whispered. "He's swindled us!"

The little cashier seemed to have crumpled. His hands were hanging limply over the arms of his chair. "Three thousand pounds!" he kept on repeating. "Three thousand pounds!"

Then Henry pulled himself together. For twenty years he had presided over the Bond Street shop of North and North, and this was the first attempt at swindling he had ever encountered. He reached for his hat and coat.

"You go and tell Mr. North what has happened," he ordered, shaking the cashier to his feet. "I'm going round to Rosenbaum's to see the pearls. It's just possible he may be mistaken. I shall be back in a few minutes."

"Something told me that cheque was no good," muttered the cashier. "Something told me at the time——"

"Go and tell Mr. North," repeated Henry from the doorway, "and go now!"

Twenty minutes later he was back again. Already the hour for closing had long since passed, but the ornamental bronze doors of North and North were still open to the public. Mechanically he swung them shut, and, having turned the key, continued to the office.

"Yes," he said at once, as young Mr. North sprang to his feet. "Yes—they're ours all right."

"And he's pawned them?"

"Went straight from here and took them to Rosenbaum. Rosenbaum gave him a thousand for them."

"But he can't pawn them," roared Mr. North. "They're not his."

Henry sat down slowly. The last half-hour seemed to have aged him. He glanced from Mr. North to the cashier. "That's what we don't know," he said. "Actually we hold his cheque. We can't do anything until we know if it's good."

"Good?" The younger man was staring at him in amazement. "Good? The whole thing is an obvious swindle. Who on earth buys a thing and then straightway goes and pawns it? Don't be a fool, Henry. What are you going to do now?"—as the manager reached out for the telephone.

"See if I can get hold of him at the Grand. There must be some explanation. I can't believe it's a swindle." He gave a number and waited a moment. "Hullo?" he called. "Hullo? Is that the Grand? Yes—North and North speaking. Can I have a word with Mr. Bertie Normancourt? Thank you." His eyes sought those of his employer, while his fingers beat a nervous tattoo on the polished surface of the table. "Hullo? Yes—yes. What? *Gone?* Going this afternoon?"

"He's bolted?" exploded young Mr. North.

"No—not yet!" Henry spoke rapidly, the receiver still clenched in his hand. "Not yet," he repeated, "but he's going this afternoon."

"Where to?"

For a second there was a bleak silence.

"Abroad—they think," intoned Henry, conscious that he was delivering the last straw.

Mr. North gasped. He looked from one to the other, cornered.

"God!" he half whispered. "I wish the governor were here. There's no way of getting hold of him? Long-distance call—or anything of that?"

Henry shook his head. Mr. North, senior, was away in Italy. He was not due in London until Sunday night. "Impossible," he said.

"Then what are we going to do? We can't sit here and let the fellow rob us of three thousand pounds." He took a turn up and down the room, and finally came back to the table. He had only been some six months down from Cambridge, and the business was still very new to him. Looking Henry squarely in the face, he repeated: "What are we going to do?"

HENRY SMITHESON drew a deep breath. In the absence of Mr. North, senior, the onus of handling the situation fell upon his shoulders. "It's a trap," he said, slowly. "He knew we couldn't cash the cheque until Monday morning, and that gives him a clear start over the week-end."

"But we must stop him!" broke in the younger man, impetuously.

Henry shook his head. "We daren't," he explained, "not until we've proved the cheque useless. To move now would be to imperil the reputation of the firm. He saw that, too, I expect."

"How would it?"

"In case the cheque should be met," said Henry.

"Met?" Mr. North was on his feet again. "Met?" he asked, incredulously. "You talk like a fool, man. Look at the facts. He buys those pearls at a quarter past twelve and pays for them by cheque. Less than thirty minutes later he pawns them for a thousand pounds cash. He's going abroad this afternoon! Met? Not likely, Henry!"

"Then what do you suggest doing?"

Mr. North, junior, was a double Blue. He was a fighter by nature. It was past his powers of endurance to sit still while he was robbed of three thousand pounds. From Henry's lined face he looked to the wilted cashier.

"Do?" he asked. "I'm going to send for the police!"

"I don't think Mr. North would wish the firm to be dragged into the law courts," ventured the little cashier, tentatively.

Henry nodded his agreement.

"Rather that than be robbed of three thousand pounds, I'll bet!" sneered Mr. North, junior. And picking up the telephone asked if Inspector Bradley would step round for a moment. Inspector Bradley had already handled several of the firm's more delicate affairs.

Half an hour later the Inspector arrived, and having heard the story saw at once that a very clear attempt at the confidence trick had come within an ace of success.

"What do you know about the fellow?" he asked, plunging straight into the heart of the matter. "Who is he?"—as nobody replied.

"Mr. Bertie Normancourt," said Henry,

slowly, "lives at the Grand Hotel. He is, apparently, a wealthy young man."

"Young ass!" broke in Mr. North.

The Inspector motioned him to silence. "Go on, Henry," he said.

"A wealthy young ass, then," went on Henry, dully. "To the women he must be a veritable godsend, since to everyone he meets, pretty well, he gives a ring, or a brooch, or some such trifle. A month or two ago he brought in a lady whom he called Clawice——"

"Who?"

"Clawice—Clarice, that is; he can't pronounce his r's—and he seems to have stuck to her ever since. I knew her sort in an instant and I knew she'd bleed him dry. In fact, I said as much to the cashier there. Right from the start she worried him for that rope of pearls, and I knew she'd get it in the end. This morning he came in for it."

"My God!" Henry half whispered. "He's swindled us!" The little cashier seemed to have crumpled. "Three thousand pounds!" he kept on repeating.

"Alone?" interrupted Bradley.

"Alone," agreed the manager. "It was after twelve o'clock and he seemed to be in a hurry. We've always taken his cheques before and they've always been O.K. I never thought for one instant that this would be any different from the others."

"But I did!" exclaimed the cashier, triumphantly "I did."

"Then why didn't you query it?" snapped the Inspector.

"The bank was closed."

"Ah! I'd forgotten that. And——" turning to Henry.

Henry related the rest of the story.

"Bit—silly—allowing the pearls to go to a man of whom you know so little," suggested Bradley when he had finished.

Henry flushed.

"But we seemed to know so much," he protested. "He was always dodging in and out."

"He would be, naturally. Did he ever give you any references?"

"No."

The Inspector sighed. "You know you folk do make it terribly easy for these crooks," he remarked.

"And I always said he was too good to be true," put in the cashier. "Such a fool couldn't possibly exist in London."

"He was such an open-faced, haw-haw kind of an ass," explained Henry. "The idea of Bertie Normancourt as a clever crook never once so much as occurred to me."

"Because a man has a bit of straw in his hair it doesn't make him a hay-seed!" volunteered the Inspector. "In fact, it's usually the other way round. Anyway, what do you want me to do?"

"Arrest him," said Mr. North, firmly. "I don't know what the governor 'ud do, but it seems mad, to me, *not* to arrest him."

"And to me, too," agreed the Inspector.

"Then call a taxi," ordered the younger man.

Twenty minutes at the station served to fulfil the preliminaries, and at precisely a quarter to three the taxi drew up at the entrance to the Grand Hotel.

"Looks as though we're only just in time," said the Inspector, pointing to where a taxi-cab stood just in front of their own. The top was laden with luggage, and all of it bore, in large letters, the initials B.N. He went across and spoke to the driver of it, and there was a smile on his face when he returned to where Mr. North and Henry were standing by their cab door. "As I thought," he said; "he's booked to catch the three-fifteen boat express from Charing Cross."

"Look out!" whispered Henry, grabbing the Inspector's arm. "This is him!"

Down the steps walked Bertie Normancourt. He had exchanged his morning clothes for a travelling suit of light grey tweeds, and, to Henry, his face seemed more pink and white than ever. As the cashier had said, he cut a figure altogether too good to be true. From the broad black silk ribbon which suspended his monocle, to the shiny black patent shoes, he seemed the personification of the silly ass of fiction.

He had almost reached the bottom step before his pale-blue eyes alighted on the little group standing by the second taxi. He looked again, surprised, and for a fraction of a second hesitated.

"Hullo, Henwy!" he called, in a high, falsetto voice.

Inspector Bradley stepped forward.

"Mr. Bertie Normancourt, I believe?"

Bertie's fingers flew to his monocle. He studied the Inspector closely.

"Pwecisely," he agreed, smilingly.

"Where are you going?"

Under the brusqueness of the Inspector's questions some of the smile left Bertie's face. He shot a glance back towards where Henry was standing.

"To Pawis," he said, slowly; and added —"for the week-end."

Inspector Bradley glanced toward the heap of luggage on the roof of the taxi.

"You'd better come with me first," he said. "There are one or two things I want to ask you," and before Bertie had time to protest he was bundled into the cab. "Vine Street!" ordered the Inspector, curtly.

Mr. North and Henry followed in their own cab, and some time later were joined by Inspector Bradley in the waiting-room of the station.

"Well?" asked the former, immediately.

Bradley smiled. "Right as rain," he said. "He's a priceless specimen, if I ever saw one. He hasn't a friend in London."

"What about Clarice?"

"Clawice," mimicked the Inspector, "is away up North, somewhere. He doesn't know her address. That's why he pawned the pearls. He says that he didn't like keeping them in the hotel and he thought a pawnbroker's would be the safest place to leave them."

"Is that the excuse he gives?" asked Henry in amazement.

"That's all," laughed the Inspector. "Well?" as a constable came up behind.

"The prisoner says that the Grand Hotel will vouch for him," reported the man.

"Ring 'em up," snapped Bradley—"or, wait, I'll do it myself." And crossing to the telephone he rang up the hotel.

"What do they say?" asked Mr. North when he returned.

"They know nothing about him. He has been living there, on and off, for the past six months, but who he is, or where he comes from, they haven't the remotest idea. At any rate, they wouldn't like to vouch for him."

"They wouldn't?"—eagerly.

"No," said Bradley. "There's no doubt he's a gem. We were lucky to catch him when we did."

"I begin to agree with you," said Henry.

THE following Monday morning saw the unusual spectacle of Mr. North, senior, arriving at the Bond Street shop just before the hour of nine o'clock. Henry, who was in the middle of recounting to the cashier the later adventures of Saturday afternoon, broke off as the rotund figure blocked the office doorway.

"Good morning, sir," he began. "I trust——"

"About this amazing swindle, Henry," interrupted the other, in his slightly pompous fashion. "I should like you to know that I thoroughly approve of all Mr. North and you did. I—er—identify myself with your course of action."

"I'm glad of that, sir. It was——"

"I've been talking to Inspector Bradley about the business, and the—er—swindler will be formally charged this morning. Did you send the cheque to the bank?"

"No, sir. I thought that——"

"Ah, yes. Of course. Well, send it

Inspector Bradley stepped forward. "Mr. Bertie Normancourt, I believe?"
Bertie's fingers flew to his monocle. He studied the Inspector closely. "Pwecisely," he agreed, smilingly.

round straight away, will you? You'd better go yourself, Greenwait"—to the cashier—"and just get it marked by the manager and let me have it immediately."

"Very good, Mr. North." The cashier, his hands trembling with excitement, extracted the cheque for three thousand pounds from the big safe and reached for his hat.

"Take a taxi," whispered Henry. "And look sharp!"

Precisely thirty-seven minutes later Henry Smitheson burst in upon the astonished Mr. North. For a second he stood struggling for breath. Then:—

"They've taken it!" he gasped. "They've accepted it. The cheque is—good!"

Mr. North sat back slowly in his chair. His lips opened, but no sound came.

"They've—what?" he got out at last, in a strangled voice.

"Accepted it! Taken it. The account is perfectly good!"

Breathing heavily, the old gentleman stumbled to his feet. He seemed stunned. "Accepted it?" he whispered, staring at Henry in a dazed kind of way. "Accepted it?"

Henry nodded. He was obviously past speech.

Suddenly Mr. North drew himself up. Somebody had made a mistake. Greenwait must go back—or, better still, he would go himself. Of course, it was obvious that someone had made an error. Some of the colour began to creep back to his cheeks. He took a turn up and down the thick pile carpet. No. It couldn't be right. Any fool could see that. No man in his right senses would buy a rope of pearls and pawn them within half an hour of buying them. Of course not. It was ridiculous. It was a deliberate attempt at a swindle. Somebody—somewhere—was making a mistake.

But there was no mistaking the bank manager's emphatic assurances. Mr. Bertie Normancourt—although a new one—was still a most valued client. His account was good. The manager held up his hands in horror when Mr. North explained the circumstances. Mr. Bertie Normancourt in jail on a charge of swindling? Impossible! Had Mr. North's son been such a fool as to act before presenting a client's cheque? Really. Really. The manager reached out for the telephone. He would ring up Vine Street and put the whole disgraceful business right. That a firm of the standing of North and North should—well! words failed him. He wouldn't like to be in Mr. North's shoes.

AND in the downstairs office of the Bond Street shop, Mr. North, junior, was arguing heatedly with a very bewildered Henry. The whole thing was preposterous. Henry had been too cautious—but when Henry flared up with the statement that caution was absolutely necessary to a man in his position, Mr. North veered to the point of view that Henry had been altogether too suspicious. Actually, in the light of the cheque's acceptance, neither of them could get back to the atmosphere of suspicion which had so clouded their brains on the Saturday morning.

The sudden appearance of Mr. North, senior, silenced the contending parties. That the worst had happened was obvious to both. There was a strange greyness round the old man's mouth, and his entire person seemed shrivelled, wilted, fallen in. He slumped into a chair as though he had reached the limit of his strength.

"Well?" jerked out his son.

Mr. North raised a curiously dull eye. He stared at the opposite wall as though he were seeing it for the first time. He studied the solitary picture there with an appearance of absorbed interest. From outside came the familiar roar of the traffic—familiar, and yet somehow different.

"Well?" repeated the younger man, shaking the other's arm impatiently.

Mr. North looked up.

"It's true," he said, in a dead level voice. "The cheque was perfectly all right."

"God!" whispered Henry, staring fascinatedly at the grey face of his employer. "Then we've——"

The old gentleman nodded. "We've arrested and—and slung into"—he jibbed at the word—"into jail a perfectly honest man."

"But—but the circumstances!" broke out his son.

"There are no circumstances in creation which can possibly excuse such an outrage. We're ruined."

Henry looked from one to the other. He was not lacking in knowledge of the world.

"Then we must buy him off," he said, promptly.

"You can't buy off a gentleman," replied Mr. North, in the same flat voice. "He, too, like us, lives on his reputation, on his credit among his friends. Nothing but the courts can put him right in the eyes of his friends."

"He hasn't got any friends!" urged the younger man, now thoroughly at grips with the situation. "And he's got no brains, either. Give me a blank cheque and let me try what I can do."

For a minute or two there was silence.

"It's either buying him off—or, as you say, ruin. Which course are we going to adopt?"

And still the old man kept silent.

"Give me that blank cheque——"

"Wait, let me think."

"No need to think, father. The issue is quite plain. It's ugly, but it's the only possible chance."

"And we should have to pay very heavy damages, in any case, when he takes us to court," observed Henry, quietly.

The old man nodded. His head fell forward into his hands. In his mind's eye he was contemplating the loss of all he held most dear. The ruin of that prestige which he had spent all his life in establishing. The ruin of his standing in the trade.

His fingers went slowly out towards the pens.

Inspector Bradley was away when young Mr. North drove up, but a word to the sergeant in charge and he was admitted to the cell.

Bertie rose at his entrance. He was not quite so immaculate as was his wont. He badly needed a shave. His coat was creased. But young North noticed none of these things.

"Mr. Normancourt," he burst out, "I've come to offer you my sincerest apologies. That sounds ridiculous, I know, but—but—oh! I don't know how to tell you——"

"I pwesoom you have been to the bank," observed Bertie, coldly.

"Yes, we have—and we found your cheque was good."

Bertie bowed.

"And—and you're free——"

Again Bertie bowed.

"And—and—what are you going to do?"

Bertie drew himself up.

"You ask me what I am going to do. I should have thought that that, at least, was fairly clear to you. Weally, Mr. North, when you weflect upon what I have gone through this week-end—the indignity, the pain, the miserwy, the discomfort—well, weally, I wonder I'm alive to tell it!"

"But, Mr. Norman——"

Bertie waved him to silence. "And my pwestige," he went on. "Fancy me—*me*—awwested in the stweet like a common wong-do-er. Me!" He shivered. "Oh! I can't beah-wit."

"But we are only too anxious to recompense you, Mr. Normancourt, for all you have suffered at our hands. Look," he added, ingenuously, "you and I are the same age. I made a mistake, but it's my father who will suffer—not me! Couldn't you—wouldn't you—accept something—anything—and forget it? After all—it's only a short week-end."

Bertie Normancourt stiffened. "Mr. North," he began, "I beah an old name—an honoured name—and you have dwagged it in the mud. You! You scoundwel!"

"I do know it, Mr. Normancourt. I realize it all. It's my own crass stupidity that's brought all this about. But—but can't you see it from my point of view?"

"You want me to be quiet. You want me to be silent. You want me, p'waps, to go abward and hide my shame."

"I don't—I do—oh, I don't care what you do as long as my father's name is saved. Be generous, Mr. Normancourt. Here, I'll fill this in for anything you like—in reason—and you could have a fine holiday at our expense. It's not a bribe"—as the other would have spoken—"but a gift, a free gift, and a very willing one."

Bertie looked at the blank cheque and frowned.

"You bwibe me?" he challenged.

"No and no and no," cried the other. "I want to show you that we realize we are wrong. As between gentlemen, Mr. Normancourt, what figure shall I write here?"

Bertie fingered his slight moustache. His pale blue eyes turned from the grated window to the anxious face of his visitor. There was a slightly higher colour in his cheeks, a higher pitch to his voice, when he suddenly spoke again.

"Ten thousand pounds," he said, coolly.

And without a second's hesitation young Mr. North filled in the cheque for that amount.

"And you will be——" he hesitated.

"I shall take no further steps in the matter," said Bertie, "if that's what you mean."

"I do!"

"You may wely on me, Mr. North."

BACK in his room at the Grand, once more bathed and shaved and dressed in his immaculate morning clothes, Bertie Normancourt picked up the telephone.

"Hullo?" he called, softly—and soft as was his voice, yet Inspector Bradley would have given his ears to have heard it. "Hullo? Is that you, Clarice? Yes, Bertie speaking. Are you ready? Yes! Yes, leaves at three-fifteen. What? Yes—easy as shelling peas!"

He hung up the receiver and for a moment stood staring at his face in the mirror. A sly smile crept up from his mouth to his eyes.

THESE THRILLING ARTICLES ARE FACT—NOT FICTION.

Cases from My Crime-Book

By

H. ASHTON-WOLFE

(Interpreter at the Criminal Courts)

Illustrated by
F. E. HILEY

AUTHOR'S NOTE

My profession as interpreter has brought me constantly in touch with the great criminal investigation centres of the world, and I have many times become intimate with some of the more interesting criminals of modern times.

The stories which I have selected for this series can be found in the official records, only one or two details having been rearranged in order to avoid giving pain and reopening old wounds.

I have myself taken part either in the investigation or the final trials of the criminals. Several of the cases I have specially selected because of the ingenuity displayed both by the law-breakers and by the investigators.

No. V. CAPTAIN VON CÖPENICK, CONVICT AND HUMORIST

IT is not often that an offence against the law is amusing, less still that it amuses the whole world. In this respect the crime committed by one Friederich Voigt, later known as Captain Von Cöpenick, is truly an exception; and since unfortunately most of my reminiscences deal with evil passions, cruelty, and bloodshed, I may be pardoned for relating one of the few experiences I ever had, whilst under Dr. Bertillon, which does not enter into this category.

It may seem strange, and even hard to believe, that I have been personally involved in so many extraordinary and exciting events in various countries. This is only apparently so, however.

If one remembers that weird, grotesque, and cruel crimes take place daily in every country and in almost every large town, the few which I can relate from personal experience dwindle to a very small number indeed. I know that every criminal investigator, every one of the active fearless members of that busy hive called Scotland Yard, could relate, if he would, as many adventures and even more than have fallen to my share. The only difference is that my experiences are cosmopolitan, due to the fact that I speak many tongues and that all my life

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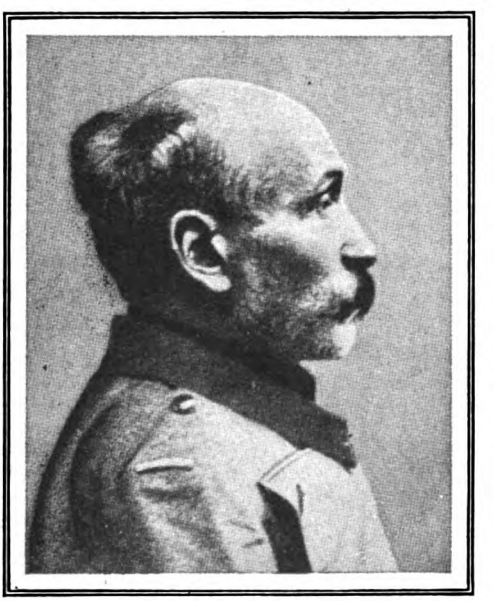
I have been a wanderer, roaming from town to town and from land to land. The world is beautiful and interesting, and I have never been able to resist the fascination of travel.

When I hear the siren of a ship or the shrill whistle of a locomotive, and watch the long line of carriages rush into the dim distance or the vessel slowly leave the harbour, an irresistible desire to wander seizes me.

As a boy of fifteen I once travelled from London to Berlin without a penny in my pocket, merely for a wager and out of curiosity, in order to ascertain what it felt like to be alone and penniless abroad. The trip had many drawbacks—at the time—but it was an experience never to be forgotten.

I have worked in the stokehold of an ocean trader from Fiji to Samoa—where to keep alive one had to drink raw gin from the bottle. It nearly killed me; but oh, the joy of looking back to an eventful life later, seated in a comfortable chair, the hardships softened by time and distance! A man's span of life does not count by the number of years he has lived, but by the things which have happened during those years. Could I travel in no other way. I would become a tramp, only in order to keep moving and not to stagnate in a rut.



Friederich Voigt,
the cobbler of Cöpenick.

I WAS therefore overjoyed when one day I received instructions to go to Berlin and to place myself at the disposal of Herr Von Jagow, the chief of police, in order to study the methods of the German Criminal Investigation (Geheimpolizei) and instruct them in the recently-perfected anthropometrical system evolved by Dr. Bertillon. A close collaboration between all countries and a mutual exchange of ideas in scientific criminal investigation was considered by M. Dufresne and his colleagues to be the best means of combating crime.

The *portrait parlé*—the speaking portrait, as it was called—was then quite new, and the exclusive property of the Paris Sûreté. This is a photograph of the criminal—once convicted—with lines running over the surface to the ears, eyes, nose, and mouth—and so grouped, measured, and classified that it is impossible for the criminal to disguise himself, or ever again to escape recognition.

Friederich Voigt, whom the world soon called Captain Von Cöpenick, was a man who knew the weakness of his country well. Was he gifted with a wonderful sense of humour, or did he simply know from experience the awe with which that *élite*, the Prussian officer, was regarded in a land where a uniform, *any uniform*, lifted its wearer high above the common herd? It may be just the latter, but his exploit was hailed with delight by everyone, high and low, who for years had been forced to kotow and make way humbly for the swaggering, sabre-clanking officers. This man—a little shoemaker—with crooked legs and enormous hands, had spent fifteen years in hard labour as a convict. Yet by donning a second-hand uniform—that of a captain, which he bought at a sale of old clothing—he was able to order the arrest of three high officials, rob the Town Hall of all its funds, and tear to shreds the legend of that superiority which for centuries had draped the military caste in the toga of the Cæsars.

The crime in itself was not a serious one, but every servant of the Kaiser gritted his teeth with rage when the truth became known, and would willingly have killed the ex-convict; for we all know that nothing hurts like ridicule.

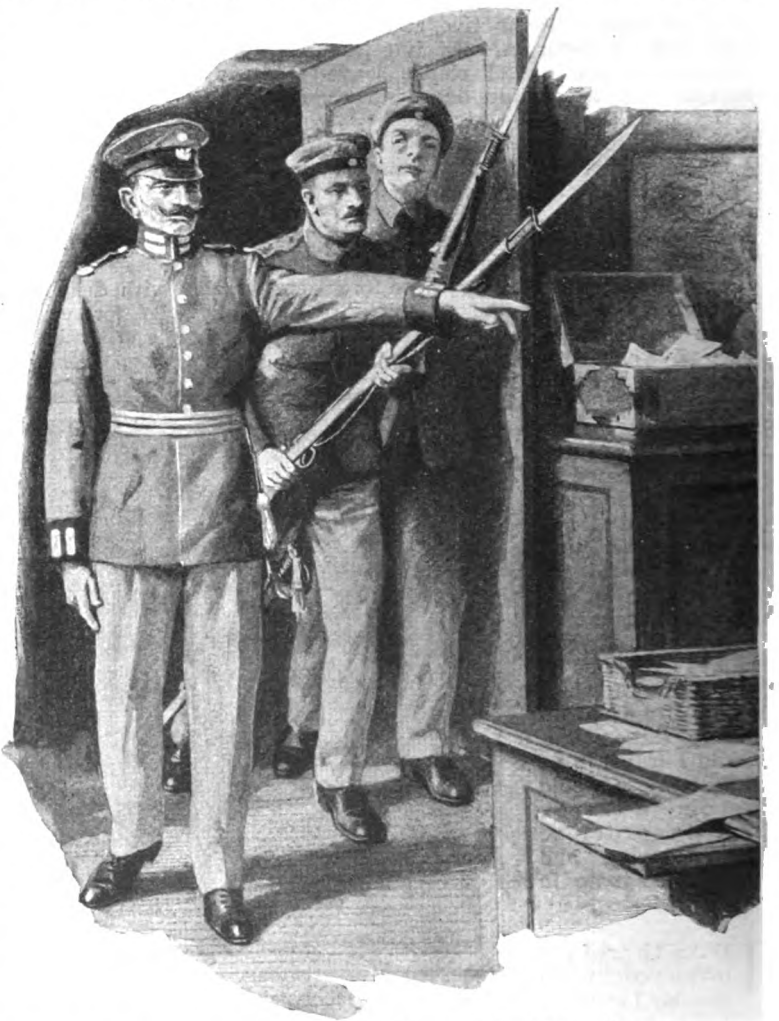
I well remember the wild theories of the German Sûreté when the news of the outrage first arrived. It was believed that an officer of the Guards had suddenly lost his reason—and men were sent in haste to all the barracks in Berlin and Spandau to inquire if a captain were missing. Thus it was that, since I happened to be in Berlin in October, 1906, I was able to follow the various phases of the investigation of one of the most original exploits ever conceived, and to be present at the capture of the criminal.

ONE morning Herr Wasserman, chief of the department in which I was working, came in excitedly and asked me if I cared to accompany him to the little town of Cöpenick, not far from Berlin, where an extraordinary outrage had been committed the day before.

A captain of the Guards, followed by twenty soldiers, had suddenly appeared in Cöpenick on the previous afternoon. He had marched to the Town Hall, where he and his men had halted. Issuing sharp commands in the usual harsh manner, he had posted six men outside the building to guard the entrance, giving strict orders that no one was to be admitted.

A curious crowd naturally collected at once, but the local police, seeing the soldiers, had dispersed them and kept the street clear.

The officer, followed by the remainder of the men, amongst whom one had been chosen as acting sergeant or Feldwebel, entered the office of the chief Secretary of State—Herr Rosenkranz. "In the name of the Kaiser," the captain bellowed, "I have orders to place you under arrest."



"In the name of the Kaiser," the captain bellowed, "I have orders to place you under arrest."

Two of the men at a sign from their chief took their stations beside the startled official, with fixed bayonets. To all the questions of the secretary the officer replied :—

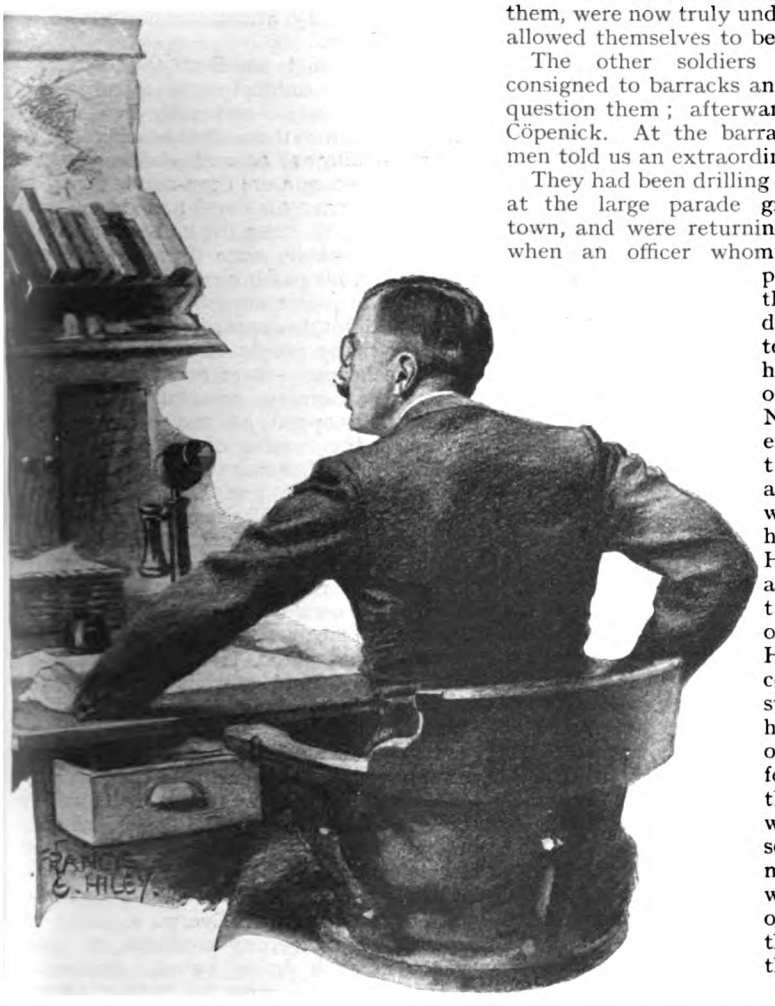
"You will know the reason for this soon enough. I am sending you to Berlin. I dare say you can guess why."

With a gasp the frightened man sank back into his chair. Resistance was useless.

In the adjoining room was the Burgomaster, Dr. Langerhaus. Throwing open the door, the captain strode in. When asked by the mayor what authority for such high-handed action he possessed, he replied brutally : "My authority ? There are my soldiers, that is authority enough for you. You also are under arrest. Where are the municipal funds ? " The mayor tremblingly replied that these were in the book-keeper's office on the ground floor.

Thither the captain went. Entering the office with a swagger, he demanded the keys of the safe from the astonished accountant, Von Wiltberg. The latter hesitated a moment. Seeing this the officer snarled : "I am responsible for the money now—the Kaiser's orders." Cowed and awestruck at

the dreadful name, Von Wiltberg silently handed over the money, four thousand marks and seventy pfennige (then about two hundred pounds). The officer counted the money, placed it carefully in an envelope, which he then closed and sealed with the municipal seal and slipped into his breast pocket. Then he wrote out a receipt and signed it—with a flourish.



Calling one of his soldiers, he sent for two cabs, and, ordering the mayor and the secretary to follow, he forced each of them to enter a vehicle. A soldier took his seat beside the coachman, another sat inside to guard the prisoner.

Thereupon the captain ordered the coachman to drive to the Neue Wache—the chief guard rooms—Unter den Linden, in Berlin. The other men he ordered back to their barracks. He himself walked towards the railway station, saluted respectfully by the local police—and was never seen again.

"Without a doubt," my friend Wasserman said, "it was an officer who has suddenly become insane who was responsible for such a crazy freak."

The poor Burgomaster, his secretary, and the four soldiers who had accompanied them, were now truly under arrest for having allowed themselves to be victimized.

The other soldiers were temporarily consigned to barracks and we were going to question them; afterwards we would go to Cöpenick. At the barracks the crestfallen men told us an extraordinary story.

They had been drilling during the morning at the large parade ground outside the town, and were returning to their quarters when an officer whom they met called peremptorily to them to halt. They did so. He curtly told them to follow him, in the name of the Kaiser. Naturally it never entered their heads to question his authority. On the way to the Rathhaus—the Town Hall—they met another squad, and these were also ordered to follow. Halting them at the corner of the main street, the captain had picked out one of them and informed him that for the afternoon he would be acting sergeant. They admitted that they were ready to carry out any orders given them—even to use their arms if need be.

From these innocent accomplices we obtained only a vague description of the captain. The acting sergeant said that they had met several officers on the way. One of them, a lieutenant, belonged to their own regiment.

We were able to question him. He confessed that he had been surprised to see these men marching as though on duty, but he supposed that they were on some special mission, since a captain accompanied them. He had been struck at the time by something not quite normal in the appearance of this officer, and later remembered that the

captain was wearing a sash, with which he should of course wear the regulation helmet, instead of the cap he had on. Otherwise there had been nothing out of the way in the man's appearance.

The inquiry at the Town Hall was not very encouraging. We took possession of the receipt for the money, which the accountant handed us with a very woebegone air. It was written in a cramped and irregular hand, and the signature was just a scrawl. One thing I noticed and pointed out to Herr Wasserman, under the scrawl was the word "Hauptmann" (captain). This had been written "Hauptman." "It looks as if the fellow did not know how to spell," I said. Herr Wasserman shrugged his shoulders. "An officer—what rubbish—they are all university men."

"That's just it—perhaps he was no officer at all."

Herr Wasserman looked at me pityingly. "As if our soldiers and the police, to say nothing of the Burgomaster, would not have discovered that at once. You have seen our Prussian officers. There is something about them—an air of distinction—which no one could imitate. Breeding always tells."

How my poor friend must have regretted these words later, when the truth could no longer be withheld. Several days were spent in searching and inquiring everywhere—but nothing was discovered. What was worse was that now the officers who had met the captain, and the two unhappy officials who had been sent to Berlin, began to fear that the whole thing had been a hoax; and for their own protection described the man we were seeking as having been tall and handsome. I could see that the police were not very anxious to find him, but had to continue the investigation in deference to the outcry in the papers. Worst of all, no captain was missing from any regiment.

A FEW days later Herr Wasserman came to me triumphantly.

"You see I was right. I said that only an officer could have committed that outrage in Cöpenick. We have just been informed that Oberlieutenant Karl Von Langebach, of the Fourth Hussars, stationed near Karlshorst, has disappeared. His comrades all noticed that for some time the lieutenant had been queer in his ways. There was a love affair, a quarrel with his *fiancée*, which preyed on his mind. The parents of the girl did not consider him wealthy enough; poor devil, he had nothing but his pay and a small allowance from an aunt. Lately he had taken to reckless gambling and lost heavily. Nearly all his fellow-officers hold some of his IOU's. Two days before this business in Cöpenick he disappeared. Several people saw him riding wildly through the forest. No doubt his troubles turned his brain. Since then no one knows what has become of him. He is the man we have to look for."

We questioned the people at a small Bierhaus in the extensive woods surrounding the little locality where the lieutenant had last been seen.

They informed us that the lieutenant had appeared suddenly one evening on a foam-flecked horse, and with hoarse voice and wild gestures demanded brandy. Of this he had swallowed several glasses, then he had tossed them a gold ten-mark piece, and brutally spurring his horse had ridden away. They showed us the path he had taken. It had rained heavily since then, but, although no traces of his passing could be seen on the ground, the police argued that a horse and rider could not disappear in a neighbourhood where so many people—foresters, labourers, and gamekeepers—were constantly passing.

Herr Wasserman ascertained that the lieutenant stopped at the little roadside tavern on the evening of the day when the robbery in Cöpenick had taken place. Without a doubt Von Langebach—insane and obsessed by the desire to obtain money—had committed it. Now he was probably hiding in one of the many empty foresters' shelters, or perhaps in one of the abandoned charcoal burners' dwellings. While some of the police officers spread out and searched the lanes and paths, Herr Wasserman and two of the Sûreté officials invited me to go with them along the broad road to Rummelsburg.

It was now almost night, but there was a full moon which rose early, so we should not want for light. It was eerie work walking through the forest. The trees assumed strange shapes. Twisted branches overhanging the path looked like knotted muscular arms—whilst in the distance dogs barked and owls hooted. Every moment we expected a dangerous madman to spring out on us with drawn sword. Somewhere in that forest he must be hiding, perhaps watching and waiting to commit another robbery. We had gone some distance and the rising moon was already visible, huge and red amongst the trees, when we heard running feet and shouts behind us.

Wheeling round with beating hearts we saw that it was one of the police. He came up to us panting and gasping.

"Come back, Herr Wasserman—the Oberlieutenant—we have found him. He is dead, and his horse too."

Greatly startled at the news, we followed the panting, exhausted man along the way we had come and then down one of the side

paths. After an hour's walk we came upon a dreadful sight. In a clearing, bathed in the rays of the moon now well above us, a knot of men surrounded a huge oak. From one of the branches dangled a stark figure with swollen, distorted face. The large sword and glittering spuss immediately caught our gaze. It was poor Lieutenant Von Langebach. Before him on the ground lay his horse, a bullet in its brain. The bridle had been removed and was now around the madman's throat.

A further examination showed that he must have attached the bridle to the limb from which he was hanging and then around his neck, leaving no slack. Then he had placed the muzzle of his revolver to his horse's head and fired. The horse was instantly killed, and, dropping, left its master hanging in the air. The investigation proved conclusively that the poor madman could never have committed the outrage in Cöpenick. Again the German Sûreté were at their wits' end. Every paper began ridiculing them, and many were the comic cartoons published.

THEN, suddenly, a workman, crossing the Tempelhofer Feld—a large public recreation ground on the outskirts of the metropolis—discovered a dirty bundle of clothes: a captain's uniform—complete with sash and tassels—but with a cap instead of a helmet. It was impossible to hush the matter up. The uniform, stained and dirty, from which the regimental marks and number had been cut, was the one worn by the mysterious captain. Nor was it possible to sustain the legend of a mad officer, for the absence of the number tabs proved conclusively that this uniform was an old one, probably bought from a second-hand clothes dealer. The military caste, from the Kaiser to youthful cadets, were furious; and still declared that even if the uniform was an old one, the wearer must have been one of them. But the public—the non-uniformed citizens—shook with laughter. What a splendid joke!

Peremptory orders came from an exalted quarter. The man must be found. Privately I communicated with Dr. Bertillon. He advised me to try what could be done with the receipt. Both the marks on the paper and the writing should help us. Unfortunately the Berlin Sûreté had only lately commenced classifying finger-prints and handwriting. They did, however, much against their will, send the receipt to the big prison at Moabit and to several other similar places. The prison books were searched for handwriting that might resemble it. And they found that an old shoemaker named Friederich Wilhelm Voigt—sentenced to fifteen years' hard labour for housebreaking, and only liberated six months previously—had possessed a scrawl that was wonderfully like that of the famous receipt.

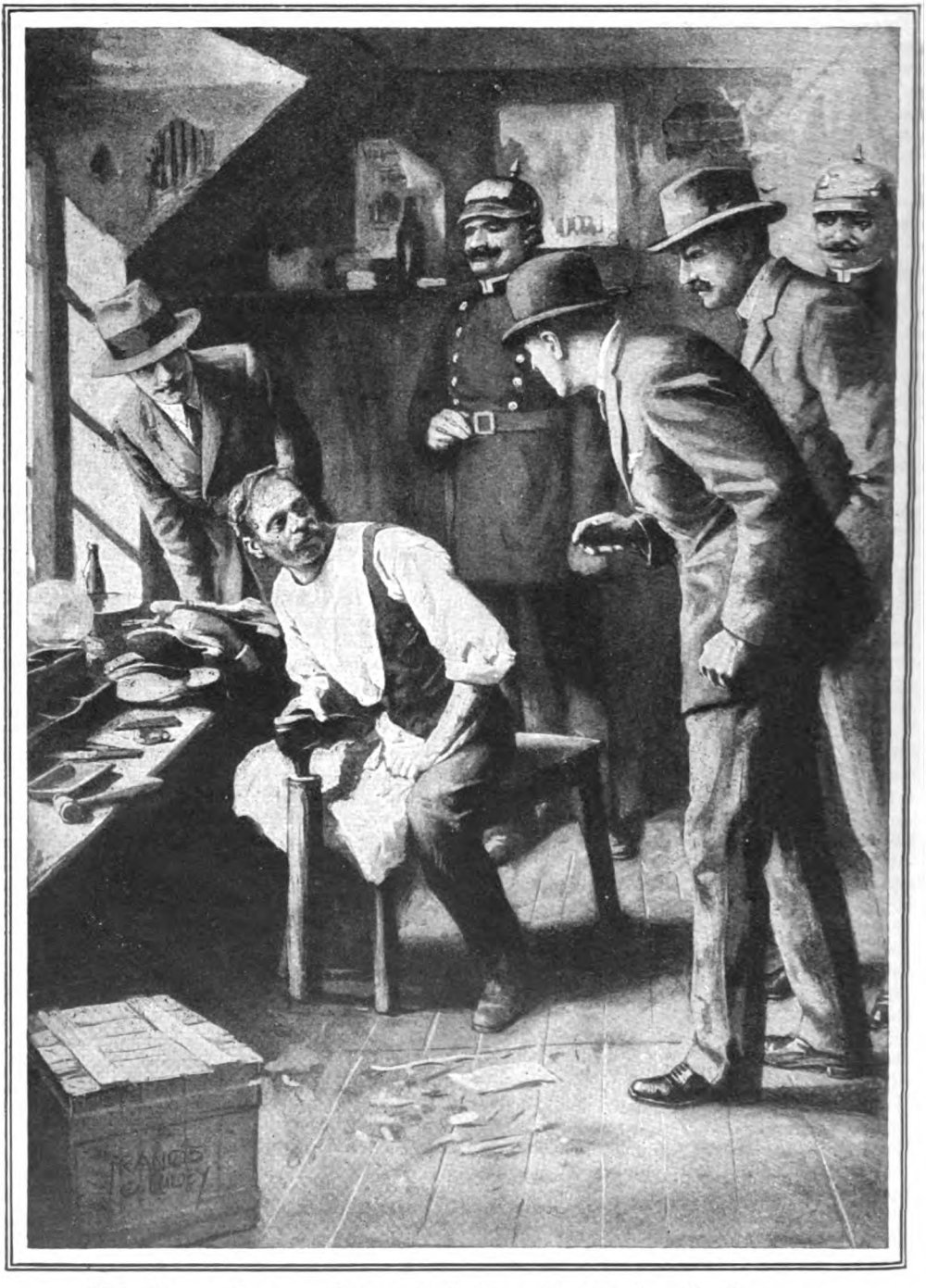
But that was impossible! Quite impossible.

Voigt was short, bandy, and ugly, long past middle age, with enormous hands, broken teeth, and all the hall-marks of the jail-bird. Nonsense! Rubbish! Herr Wasserman laughed heartily at what he called the absurd impertinence of the warder who discovered the entry in the prison books. He laughed less boisterously when this warder—a man who was evidently not afraid to speak his mind—brought a convict named Hartman before the governor. To him Hartman related a strange story. Voigt and he had been mates, and often worked side by side. Towards the end of the shoemaker's sentence, the latter had spoken several times in vague terms of a great scheme which he had conceived. When Hartman asked for details Voigt had put him off. But one day he said: "I am going to be an officer and bluff all the police."

Hartman laughed and thought it was meant as a joke, but when he heard from the warder, under whom he worked for many years, what had happened, he at once remembered what Voigt had said. The governor refused to listen to the ridiculous story, but the tale leaked out. Probably the warder, or perhaps recently liberated prisoners, were responsible for this. So the Sûreté had to act. Prison photographs of the shoemaker were shown to the accountant and the Burgomaster. They did not recognize the man at all. The soldiers who had acted in the comedy at Cöpenick also swore that the appearance of the captain who had stopped them was totally different.

One of them, however, had in the meantime served his three years as a soldier and was now a civilian, free from the military yoke. He at once declared that, although the uniform and the cap made a difference, the picture was undoubtedly that of the captain. A search for Voigt now commenced. Rewards for his capture were offered by the police and by the newspapers. He was at last run to earth in a poor lodging in the east end of Berlin at number twenty-two, Langestrasse. When we entered the dirty little room Voigt was sitting in his shirt-sleeves at a low bench, mending shoes. At sight of the detectives he grinned and said:—

"Morning, gentlemen; what can I do for you? I don't make shoes now, but I still repair them."



"Morning, gentlemen; what can I do for you? I don't make shoes now, but I still repair them."

When he was told that he would have to accompany them, he seemed surprised.

"Why?" he said. "I have done nothing wrong, I am earning my living honestly."

He was taken to the cells and examined by the "Untersuchungsrichter," the investigating judge. He swore that he knew nothing about the hold-up in uniform.

When confronted by the Mayor of Cöpenick, the latter was indignant and swore that he had never seen the man before. It is possible that he did so in good faith, for Voigt was dirty, unshaven, and ill-dressed, and by no stretch of the imagination could one picture him as an officer. The judge realized this also. He ordered the uniform to be fetched and put on Voigt. When this was done it was seen that the sleeves and trousers were much too long and that he looked more than ever like a scarecrow. One of the inspectors was about to take the uniform off when he noticed some pieces of thread hanging from one sleeve. Calling for needle and cotton he turned the sleeves and trousers in and sewed them quickly at the spot where the threads were found. A barber was then fetched and Voigt was washed and shaven and his hair cut and carefully brushed. The result was wonderful. The ex-soldier and the accountant were then brought in. The start they gave at the sight of Voigt was not lost on the judge. There was no longer any doubt. It was truly the ugly little shoemaker who had coolly arrested the two most important officials of Cöpenick and robbed the safe.

AT the trial, the envelope with the broken seal was sworn to by the accountant. For some curious reason Voigt had kept this and it had been found in his room. What he had done with the money he refused to say. Handwriting experts proved conclusively that the receipt was in the shoemaker's writing.

For days vast crowds waited outside the court.

He was sentenced to four years' imprisonment by a judge who had much ado to keep a straight face during the trial.

When the verdict was known the crowd yelled and hooted, and cries of "Let him go! Reward him, don't punish him!" sounded from all sides. The police had great difficulty in restoring order. In deference to public opinion the Kaiser commuted the sentence to two years'.

Voigt—now known as the "Hauptmann Von Cöpenick"—became famous throughout the whole world, and when he was released he found that wealth was his. An old lady when dying had made a will leaving him all her money. "Because he provided me with the best laugh I ever had," the will stated. Others followed her example, and the old cobbler was able to spend the rest of his life in comfort.

I SPOKE to him after the trial, before he was taken away. At first he would not say much, for he had seen me with the detectives. When I told him that I was an Englishman studying German police methods, he grinned.

"I should never have been caught," he said, "if it had not been for Hartman—however, I'll be even with him some day. You English have a silly proverb, have you not, that 'clothes don't make a man.' Well—do you still believe it?"

I laughed. "It doesn't apply to uniforms nor to Germany, Hauptmann," and, saluting in the Prussian manner, I left him.

(Next month: "Herr Grunenthal of the Reichsbank and His Tragic Love.")

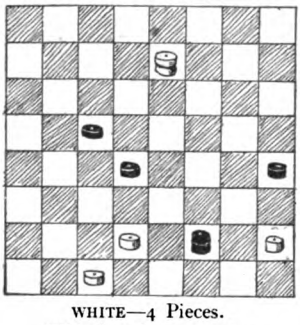
PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

866.—EASY DRAUGHTS PROBLEM.

THIS little problem by T. Muir involves pretty strategy. It will be solved readily by every experienced player, but the novice will do well to study it.

BLACK—4 Pieces.



WHITE—4 Pieces.

White to play and win.

867.—THE TANK PUZZLE.

THE area of the floor of a tank is six square feet, the water in it is nine inches deep. How much does the water rise (1) if a one foot metal cube is put in it; (2) how much further does it rise if another cube like it is put in by its side?

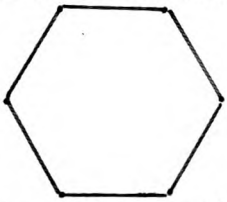
868.—TREMENDOUS ALL.

IF you drop one letter from the above title what remains should give you the clue that will enable you to trace all the twelve words in the following:—

(1) An ancient charm should here be quickly seen.
(2) A centre of amusement long has been.
(3) A shining state, to this you will agree.
(4) If verse you write this plan you'll promptly see.
(5) A pigment—simply that and nothing more.
(6) A growth not pleasant—an affliction sore.
(7) A foreign coin for those who buy and sell.
(8) Worn on the head ecclesiastical.
(9) A chemical—a salt—you'll find around.
(10) In midst of all is ever to be found.
(11) A figure quite alarming when about.
(12) A symbol of authority, no doubt.

869.—A MATCH PUZZLE.

HERE is a little match puzzle for our juvenile readers. With six matches form a hexagon, as here



shown. Now, by moving only two matches and adding one more, can you form two diamonds?

870.—PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION.

THERE are ten names of candidates on a proportional representation ballot paper. In this system of voting the voters place number 1 against the candidate of their first choice. They may also place 2 against the candidate of their second choice, and so on until all the ten candidates have numbers placed opposite to their names. The voters must mark their first choice, and any others may be marked or not as they wish. In how many different ways can the ballot paper be marked by the voter?

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

861.—BLOCKS AND SQUARES.

THE smallest number of blocks in each box appears to be 1,344. Surrounding the hollow square 34^2, the first girl makes her square 50^2, the second girl 62^2, and the third girl 72^2, with her four blocks left over for the corners.

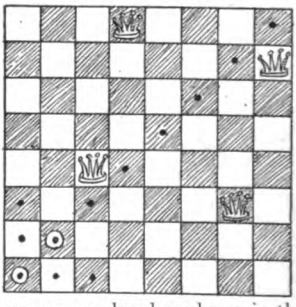
862.—SHARING THE APPLES.

NED SMITH and his sister Jane took 3 and 3 apples respectively. Tom and Kate Brown took 8 and 4 respectively, Bill and Anne Jones took 3 and 1 respectively, and Jack and Mary Robinson took 8 and 2 respectively. This accounts for the 32 apples.

863.—A CHARADE.

THE word is: MA-LADY.

864.—THE GUARDED CHESSBOARD.



IF four queens are placed as shown in the diagram the fifth can be added on either of the twelve squares marked with dots, the squares with encircled dots being the only two needing attention.

865.—THE THREE DROVERS.

JACK had eleven animals, Jim had seven, and Dan had twenty-one, so that there were thirty-nine altogether.

851.—HEPTAGON AND SQUARE.

MY invitation to readers to attempt a dissection in nine pieces has resulted in my receiving correct and ingenious solutions from Lt.-Col. C. E. P. Sankey and from Mr. H. G. Charlton. I regret that the limitations of space prevent my giving their methods. They are difficult and a little complex, but I think the solution of the first-named gentleman is the better of the two. Their record will be hard, perhaps impossible, to beat.

The Main Chance

By

A. M. BURRAGE

Illustrated by
NORMAN SUTCLIFFE

THE studio was over a mews. Miss Linwood had been prepared for that by the address which had been given her by the art dealer in Tottenham Court Road. Nowadays, she knew, quite nice people lived over mews, but because she had come in the expectation of finding acute poverty she mounted the uncarpeted stairs with all the less pleasurable sensations which might beset a society woman on her first afternoon's slumming.

It was half-past six on a raw evening ; it was already dark and it was raining. Miss Linwood's spirits had a chameleon-like gift for taking on the colour of her surroundings, and she felt shudderingly depressed. At their best the back streets of Chelsea are not particularly cheerful to alien eyes, and they do not look at their best on a raw, wet, muddy evening. Down in the yard two taxi-drivers were cursing each other with Cockney heartiness and a chained dog was barking at them. Through different windows on the ground level came the noises of a child screaming and a nasal voice from a loud gramophone yelling inanities in some sort of time and tune. Miss Linwood shivered and tried to wriggle deeper into her expensive furs.

She was a little, elderly, white, peaked, faded woman with dark, lack-lustre eyes and a proud nose. Hers was the type which belongs to Bath and Cheltenham and the smaller cathedral cities. In such places and on fine mornings between eleven and twelve you may see scores of such women out shopping, some of them still with a coachman, a brougham, and a pair of horses. They are women of good families, over whose world time has passed like a tide, leaving them stranded and alone on little sandy islands. They live for the most part in dark, secluded old houses amid treasures of furniture and china ; and not until after they are dead do their neighbours learn with amazement the extent of their wealth.

There was a door at the top of the draughty wooden stairs. Miss Linwood knocked on it discreetly with little gloved knuckles and an answer came immediately from within.

"*Entrez !*" called a man's voice. "But that is a French word which perhaps you wouldn't understand. Enter, if you be a friend. But who are you, anyhow ? "

Miss Linwood pushed open the door and entered timidly. She found herself in a room much larger than she had expected to see. It was lit by two candles in brass sticks, standing low on a little foot-high platform which she guessed rightly to be a model's throne. The light thus given was wavering and eerie. On walls, floor, and ceiling great blotches of shadow bulged and dwindled and thus recorded every least current of air. Only a red glow from the bottom of a tall stove gleamed steadily from across the room.

The floor of the studio was bare save for an occasional worn rug, and it was sparsely furnished. There were but two chairs. A curtain drawn right across one end hinted at the presence of a concealed bed. There was an easel ; and a table standing flush with one of the walls was littered with the stock-in-trade of a painter. There were many pictures on the walls, mostly unframed, and many more canvases stood on the floor, their faces turned to the skirting against which they leaned.

Some of these details impressed themselves on Miss Linwood's subconsciousness on the moment of her entering the room, but her gaze was all for the tall, lean young man who had risen from his seat on the low platform and was now coming towards her. In that moment he stood between her and the candles, and loomed a gaunt and featureless silhouette. She had interrupted him in the midst of a meal. The platform was littered with food in paper wrappings : a loaf of bread, cheese, and corned beef.

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There was also a quart bottle of light dinner ale, but no sign of a glass.

"Mervyn," faltered Miss Linwood, "don't you know me? I've come to say I'm sorry for the way I've treated you. I didn't understand, my dear. I've come to help you now if you need help, and if you can forgive me."

She felt better, having delivered herself of this carefully rehearsed speech.

"Lord bless us!" exclaimed the young man. "And God forgive me for having lost faith in Cinderella's godmother. Would that I indeed were Mervyn. Lucky Mervyn! But Mervyn who?"

Even as he began to speak she realized that he was not the man she had taken him to be, the man she had come expecting to find. Her heart sank and she began to falter.

"Oh, but he lives here, doesn't he? The art dealer gave me his address. I have been searching for him all day—my nephew, Mr. Mervyn Gilkes. He does live here, surely?"

The young man considered for a moment.

"Of course!" he exclaimed. "What an ass I am! Gilkes's first name *is* Mervyn. But I'm afraid he's out."

"And his—his wife? I heard that he was married."

"She's out, too. I expect they've got hold of some money and gone off to dinner somewhere. But won't you sit down? Is there any message I can give him?"

He placed a chair for her close to the stove, but she ignored it for the time being and kept him standing.

"I am his aunt, Miss Amelia Linwood," she said. "Can you tell me how long they will be and where I can find them?"

The young man inclined his head in acknowledgment of her name.

"I," he said, "am Charles Darnell, very much at your service, Miss Linwood. Now let me see. Where are they? They might be in any one of a dozen restaurants around here, or they may have percolated into the uttermost parts of Soho. When they will be back is equally uncertain, but I should say not this side of midnight. They were not here when I came in ten minutes ago. It was my intention to invite myself to their board. As they have gone out I have been compelled to forage for myself. You see, Miss Linwood, we have eliminated all ceremony from our lives."

MISS LINWOOD could see that for herself, and realized that there were many worlds within the world in which she lived. She set up a nervous, disappointed twittering.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear! And I must catch my train back to Canterbury in an hour's time. I am not on the telephone, and my two old servants would die of fright if I missed it. What can I do?"

"If I can help you in any way," Darnell began, and then broke off to say: "But won't you take a chair? I must apologize for the light. I think the slot meter requires a bob—which I haven't got."

"I think I have a shilling," said Miss Linwood, and fumbled in her purse as she sat down.

Darnell thanked her, switched on the electric light, and walked over to a corner whence proceeded the harsh grinding of a revolving disc and the sound of a falling coin. The sudden flood of light revealed him as a plain, cadaverous, raw-boned young man of twenty-six or -seven, with a shock of untidy mouse-coloured hair and great staring blue eyes which were at once humorous and hungry.

"In any event," he said, approaching her once more, "I don't think I should wait until they come back. You see, Miss Linwood, our life isn't your life, and if dear old Gilkes and his missus have got hold of a bit of money they're more likely than not to return fairly well bottled."

"Do you mean——?" Miss Linwood gasped.

"Oh, nothing to speak of," the young man hastened to add. "But noisy, you know."

Miss Linwood sighed heavily, but in her prim way she was determined to face facts, and there were many questions which she wanted to ask.

"Are they married—properly married, I mean?" she managed to say.

"Oh, yes. Churched and everything. But then, dear old Gilkes was always eccentric."

"Can you tell me—what is *she* like?"

"Oh, Molly's a dear. Not your sort, though, I'm afraid. She was a waitress at the sausage shop round the corner. She's just the wife for old Gilkes, though, and the best and loyalest soul you ever met. Why, she had a chance of marrying a commercial traveller and living at Walham Green, but she wouldn't take it."

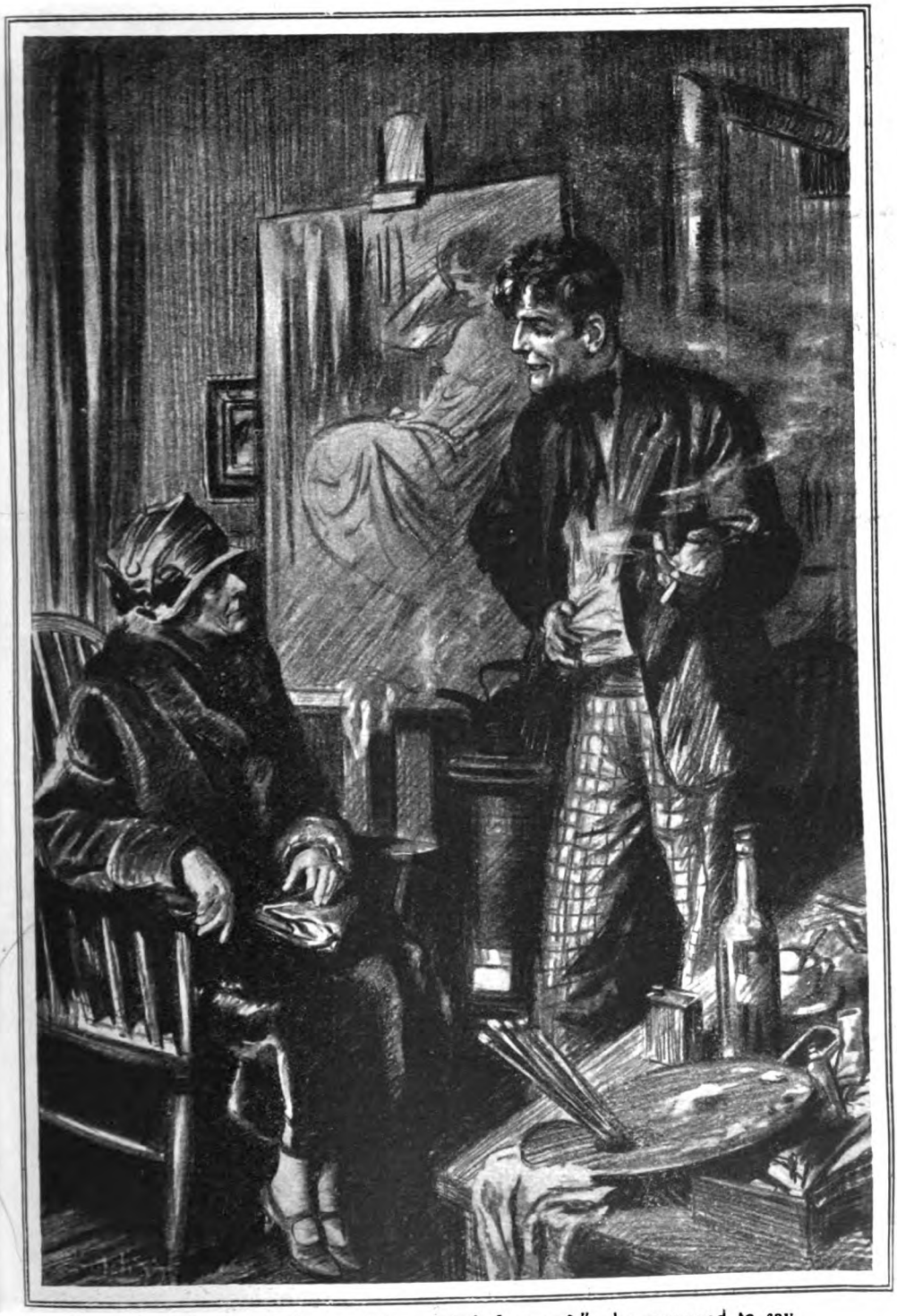
Miss Linwood looked down at the glowing end of the stove.

"You seem very kind," she said, "and you know my nephew and understand him. I wonder if you could give me some advice? Perhaps you have heard him speak of me?"

Darnell considered for a moment and shook his head.

"Really," he remarked, "I'm afraid I haven't."

Strangely enough, she seemed pleased rather than otherwise.



"Are they married—properly married, I mean?" she managed to say.
"Oh, yes. Churched and everything."

"That is just like Mervyn. If he could not speak kindly of anyone he would not speak at all. You are an artist yourself, Mr. Darnell?"

He smiled and bowed.

"My picture of a sewing-machine, which you will find in the advertisement pages of nearly every magazine, has been justly praised by all the more discerning critics."

"And you understand Temperament and —and Bohemianism, and such things?"

Darnell smiled deprecatingly at those dreadful words.

"I think I know what you mean," he said, quietly.

"Then I will tell you about Mervyn. He is my dear sister's child, and he was left an orphan at the age of seven. I adopted him. Perhaps I was not well fitted to bring up a boy, but I took the advice of experienced gentlemen like Colonel Foyland and Canon Willby. I sent him to school at Marlborough, and meant him to go on to Oxford, and afterwards enter the legal profession, like all his father's family. But he did badly at school. He was always drawing, you understand, and didn't seem to take any interest in much else. He always said that he was going to be an artist, but I thought he would grow out of it.

"Our first serious quarrel came when he was nineteen. He flatly declined to read law, and said he was going to paint pictures instead. I said that he could be a lawyer and paint pictures in his spare time, but he only laughed at me. And he refused to go up to Oxford, saying that it was a waste of time.

"We quarrelled finally when he was twenty-one. There was a little, a very little, money in trust for him, only two or three hundred pounds, but he said that it was enough to see him through his training at an art school. He took it and went. I told him to expect no allowance from me, and nothing from my will. He did not care. He went. That was six years ago, and I haven't seen or heard from him since.

"Two years ago somebody from Canterbury met him accidentally in town and found him looking wretchedly poor. That was how I came to hear that he was married. But I hardened my heart against him. He had made his own bed, I said, and now he could lie on it. I drowned the voice of conscience which told me how a little money might have helped him through his early struggles. One does not always realize the truth about oneself, and I did not see that I had been acting like a hard and spiteful woman. Because he had thwarted my ambition for him I was deliberately thwarting his ambition for himself. Now I realize that I am responsible for all that he may have become. This disastrous marriage——"

"DISASTROUS marriage be hanged!" exclaimed Darnell, and having no manners he uttered a great laugh. "Molly's one of the best, although to be sure she might not be a social success in Canterbury. Still, some of your great ladies, you know, come through the Divorce Court with no particular credit. If Gilkes were a lawyer or a barrister, or whatever you wanted to make him, Molly would hardly fill the bill. But an artist, thank Heaven, can please himself, and he generally does."

Miss Linwood hung her head abashed.

"Are they very poor?" she asked, just above a whisper.

"Look around you," said Darnell. "This is their home."

"But he makes a living?"

"A sort of living, I suppose. Commercial work, mostly. And the man can paint like an angel. I suppose his turn will come in time. But I gather that you have repented, Miss Linwood, and come with an offer to help him."

"I am essentially a Victorian," confessed Miss Linwood, "but even the most old-fashioned of us can hardly escape new ideas. The few young people that I know regard it as their right to choose their own careers, and their parents do not try to thwart them. And then I found a line in one of Stevenson's stories which set me thinking. 'Art is not singing a song or painting a water-colour; it is a life to be lived.' And then I read books about artists and realized that they are temperamentally different from the rest of mankind, and I began to realize that poor Mervyn could not help himself and that he had been compelled to follow his own star. I had a long talk with my dear old friend Canon Willby, and he owned that he thought I had been wrong all the while. I ought at least to have made the poor boy an allowance. A little poverty may stimulate young ambition, but too much may strangle it."

By nodding emphatically Darnell expressed cordial agreement with this sentiment.

"And so you have come," he suggested, "with an offer of fatted calves?"

"I have come," said Miss Linwood, "to undo the harm I have done so far as lies in my power, and to help Mervyn to achieve the height of his ambitions."

Darnell regarded her with intense interest. He had eight aunts altogether, and he was reflecting how willingly he would have exchanged all of them for Miss Linwood.

He held out Miss Linwood's cheque. "Just sold ten of my pictures to a dear old lady," he explained.

"It must be fun to have money," he said, almost wistfully, "and go about playing fairy godmother. And how, if I may ask, do you propose helping Gilkes?"

"By relieving his mind of all financial anxieties. My house in Canterbury is much too large for one. I was hoping that perhaps he would bring his wife to live with me I would have a studio built for him in the garden Surely one can paint as well in Canterbury as elsewhere."

"And you'd take on Molly and all?"

"Yes," said Miss Linwood, pursing her lips.

"Then you're a good sort, Miss Linwood, but it couldn't possibly work. We funny, shabby, more or less happy people have to work out our own destinies. It is quite certain that Mervyn and Molly would hate Canterbury quite as much as Canterbury would hate them. Molly hasn't been brought up among golfing Colonels and Deans' daughters, and she'd hate the strain of being on her best behaviour. Gilkes has completely lost touch with that life. Besides, Molly would be certain to make the most ghastly floaters and be shunned by everybody. Poor dear, she can't help swearing when anything annoys her. And her taste in anecdotes would seem a little startling to the inhabitants of a cathedral city. There would only be another row and another estrangement."

Miss Linwood looked up and nodded.

"That is why I have told you all this," she said. "I wanted your advice. Tell me how I can help Mervyn best. By making him an allowance, you think?"

Darnell appeared to consider, and then shook his head.

"That might have been all right at first," he remarked, "but one gets lazy and tired of the struggle, you know, and if dear old Gilkes found himself receiving money for nothing it is more than likely that he wouldn't work. I should buy his pictures and give him a fair price for them. That will keep him in comfort and spur him on to work."

The old lady smiled and nodded brightly.

"And that would save his pride too, wouldn't it?" she said. "Are they all for sale—the pictures in this room?"

"There isn't one over which I shouldn't faint with joy if I were Mervyn and somebody offered me a tenner for it."

Miss Linwood looked at her watch and fidgeted.

"I am getting anxious about my train," she said. "I wish I hadn't sent my taxi away. Can I get one out of the mews?"

Darnell shook his head.

"All the men there are back off duty, and they wouldn't go out again unless their homes were on fire. Your best way is to walk to the top and catch a bus to Sloane

Square. Then you can get on the Underground. It's quickest that way."

Miss Linwood thanked him and rose. She had plenty of time, but her natural nervousness and fussiness insisted on her arriving at railway stations twenty minutes before her train was due.

"I haven't time to see his pictures, have I? I want to buy some. I wonder if you would be so kind as to pick out ten for me and ask Mervyn to pack them and send them on?"

Darnell inclined his head.

"I shall be charmed," he said. "Indeed, I was about to suggest some such arrangement. If you will leave me your address I will attend to it myself. Gilkes ought to consider himself one of the luckiest men in the world."

Miss Linwood began to twitter once more.

"It's so very good of you. Do you think you could find me a pen and ink? Oh, thank you so much. And give Mervyn my love, won't you? And say I will try to come up again one day next week. And I'll buy some more of his pictures very soon. And tell him he's to work hard and become a great man."

Darnell murmured a promise to deliver all these messages, while he stared at the long blue cheque-book which Miss Linwood was taking from her hand-bag. For one moment, and one moment only, he lowered his gaze.

"I think," he said, softly and almost casually, "I should leave the cheque uncrossed and payable to bearer. Dear old Gilkes will have less trouble in getting it cashed that way."

FIVE minutes after Miss Linwood had gone footfalls sounded on the stairs and the door was pushed open by a short, stout young man whom Darnell addressed as "Piggy." When in work "Piggy" played the piano in a cinema orchestra, but just now he was taking a compulsory rest. He greeted Darnell with a smile and a wave of the hand.

"Hullo, Charles! Take us out and buy us a drink, will you? And got half a crown you don't want?"

"Plenty of half-crowns," said Darnell, heartily, "if we can get some good innkeeper to advance a bit on the strength of this."

He held out Miss Linwood's cheque.

"Just sold ten of my pictures to a dear old lady," he explained.

"Piggy" looked at the cheque, gasped, and then swore.

"Was she mad?" he demanded, in frank bewilderment.

"The innuendo is unkind," said Darnell, severely. "She has made a great bargain. I don't know who Mervyn Gilkes may be, but I bet my work is better than his. Have you ever heard of a Mervyn Gilkes?"

"Piggy" shook his head.

"Don't believe there is such a man," he remarked.

"Oh, yes, there is. And he must have had this studio before me. The only snag is that I shall now have to clear out, just when I was beginning to get comfortable. A really nice old lady, Piggy, come to help dear Mervyn, and unwittingly helped me instead. I am not an authority on ethics, but I maintain that I have as much right as any other poor devil of a painter to a rich maiden aunt running about loose and trying to unload her wealth."

"Piggy" stared and laughed.

"What a frightful old fraud you are!" he exclaimed.

"Fraud my left foot! She shall have her ten pictures, and good value for money."

The other giggled helplessly.

"I've always said that you never had a conscience, Charles."

"I've lots of conscience," Darnell maintained, moving towards the door. "And do you know what my conscience is going to make me do? It's going to make me seek out this Mervyn Gilkes and convey to him by stealth the good news that his rich old aunt has been raking Chelsea to find him. Could any man do more?"

"Piggy" turned and his shoulders were heaving.

"Oh, take me out," he said, weakly "and buy me a drink!"

Interlude in a Quiet Life

By

W. TOWNEND

Illustrated by
L. G. ILLINGWORTH

THERE were villas on either side of the road and green lawns and well-kept gardens. In the middle distance was a stretch of waste land, gay with wild flowers and estate agents' notice boards, and farther off were woods and the rolling hills, spread out under the blue, unclouded sky.

Captain Crupper of the s.s. *Arpella*, home from China, gathered that his passion for exploration had led him to the uttermost limits of suburban London in this direction at least. He did not know where he was exactly, having lost his way, but he was on new territory and he was happy. Soon he would be alone with Nature, the trees, the grass, butterflies, and singing birds and squirrels, and the worries of a shipmaster could be cast aside for a time and be forgotten.

Ahead of him a stout blonde lady in pink, carrying parcels and a shopping basket, dragged slowly along.

Captain Crupper observed her, not without interest.

Perhaps she was tired. No wonder, with those high heels! He put her down as a slave to fashion and pitied her. Her skirt was too short by inches. All women, he reflected, were crazy. Again he pitied her. Perhaps she was feeling the heat. It was possible, from the way she walked.

When she reached a big red brick house with blue and white sunblinds and a deep veranda overgrown with wistaria, she halted. If she was home, thought Captain Crupper, why didn't she go indoors? Very slowly she pushed open the iron gate which was ajar. Very deliberately she climbed the step that led to the front path. She hesitated, as though doubtful, then suddenly she let her shopping basket and her parcels fall, raised her hands to her head, and collapsed into a sitting position on to the lawn.

Captain Crupper was a man of action He knew that the stout blonde lady had been overcome by the heat and he must get her into her house as soon as he could.

He hurried toward her.

"Is anything wrong, ma'am?" he asked, bending over her.

She dropped her hands and stared at him. Her plump face was flushed, in her large, child-like blue eyes there was an appealing, troubled look, she panted for breath, her fair hair was lank under the small, close-fitting straw hat. She seemed the essence of good nature and helplessness and resignation.

"I'm not sitting here for fun!" she said, faintly.

Captain Crupper, efficient always, took charge.

"Ma'am," he said, "you must trust yourself to me!" He prided himself on saying the right thing. 'I'm a family man with daughters of my own! I'll look after you! Tactfully he adjusted her skirt.

"Thank you," she said. "The sun was getting so hot I just couldn't see where I was at! Never known it affect me like this before, ever!"

Though short in stature—a sore point—and thin, Captain Crupper was strong. Time and again deck hands, led astray by his mild and clerical-like appearance, had had cause to regret their error. The stout lady in pink was heavy, but not so heavy that he could not haul her to her feet and with one arm about her waist support her toward her home.

"My parcels!" she said.

"I've got 'em," he said. "Lean your weight on me, ma'am!"

The stout lady took him at his word.

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It was with difficulty that he managed to steer her up the steps on to the wide veranda. The front door was open, and they staggered into a cool lounge hall, furnished with chairs and a couch, and a round table on which was a china bowl filled with red roses. The walls were decorated with pictures in gilt frames. On the polished parquet floor was a thick Persian rug. A flight of stairs led to the upper storey.

"Is anyone in?" called Captain Crupper.

There was no reply, yet above his head he could hear footsteps. Someone was walking to and fro in an upstairs room. Captain Crupper diagnosed agitation of mind and petulance, if not temper, from the sound.

The stout lady's eyes were once more closed. She breathed with an effort. Afraid that she might faint, Captain Crupper guided her toward the couch, turned her about, and released her. She swayed toward him. He laid one hand flat on her chest and pushed firmly. She uttered a little scream and sank back limply on to the cushions.

The tramp of footsteps had ceased. A girl's voice said, distinctly:—

"I won't! I won't! I tell you I won't! I don't care if you have to beg in the street! So there!"

Captain Crupper waited for the stout lady to explain what was happening. Her face had lost its pinkness. Possibly she had fainted!

In a panic, he opened a door and found himself in a dining-room where there was on the sideboard a jug of water.

AS he returned to the hall, carrying a glass of water, a high-heeled, white satin slipper came hurtling past his head from upstairs, crashed against the wall, and fell to the floor, together with a picture and pieces of broken glass.

Startled, Captain Crupper looked up, but saw no one.

The girl's voice said:—

"Will you get out? Do you hear me, you old idiot!"

Captain Crupper glanced inquiringly at the stout lady, who gazed back at him with a thoughtful expression but said nothing.

He gave her the glass of water and she drank thirstily.

"Thank you," she said. "I'm a lot better already: my feet don't belong to me, quite, all the same!"

A door slammed with violence and an elderly gentleman in his shirt-sleeves hurried downstairs.

He was stout and bald: his face was clean-shaven and plump and pale: he wore spectacles with tortoiseshell rims and thick lenses that made his round eyes appear rounder and larger than they really were; and he showed not the least astonishment at seeing Captain Crupper.

"I've done all I can," he said, "and she just won't listen to reason!"

Captain Crupper, after a cautious side-glance at the stout blonde lady in pink, said:—

"Won't she? Oh!"

"Isn't that too bad of her?" said the stout lady. She sighed and rubbed her ankles with her heels, and Captain Crupper saw that she had discarded her shoes. "You don't mind, do you?" she said.

"Of course not!" said Captain Crupper.

The bald-headed man nodded.

"That's right, too. Why not? I told Mrs. Hennah. I said: 'Sarah, don't you go and leave me with that Sheila! She ain't responsible, the state of mind she's in, no more'n a wet hen!"

"You don't mean to say!" said the stout lady.

A door upstairs creaked and the bald-headed man held up a finger.

"She's listening!" he said.

"Am I?" said the girl's voice. "Am I?"

Another white satin slipper hit the stout bald man on the side of the head. He yelped sharply and collapsed into an arm-chair.

"A wild cat!" he said. "Yes, sir, she's a wild cat, that girl! I'd rather tackle a tigress, single-handed, any day! That's what I told Mrs. Hennah!"

The stout blonde lady shrieked as a white satin frock fluttered down from over the banisters and hung limp and forlorn from the alabaster bowl of the electric light suspended from the ceiling above. A white lace veil, white silk stockings, and garters followed.

"There!" said the bald man. "What'd I tell you? Beyond all reason!" He removed his spectacles and wiped his eyes with a silk handkerchief. "She'll kill herself, that's what she'll do! She will. Changes her mind at a minute's notice! That's Sheila! I warned 'em, but they wouldn't listen! I know what that girl is, if they don't! You can't trust her! She promised, they said! What's a promise to her?"

Upstairs, the girl Sheila was once more tramping to and fro. There was a sudden crash, as of something heavy falling to the floor, and then silence.

The stout bald man, who was half way to his feet, sank back into his chair again.

"I knew it! And when Mr. Cargo comes, and come he will, and Mrs. Hennah, maybe, they'll never forgive me!" He turned toward Captain Crupper. "Friend, go upstairs and see if she's hurt. I daren't go near her myself, not after the last time!"

Captain Crupper looked at the stout lady

in pink for guidance. He would take instructions from her or no one.

"You'd better," she said. "That girl's apt to go off the deep end, if she's not spoken to!"

Captain Crupper, amazed at her placidity in such a crisis, hurried up the stairs.

A door opened a few inches and a slim hand beckoned.

"Who's that?" said a low voice. "You got a message from Jack?"

The hand clasped his wrist and drew him toward the door, which opened wide and revealed a girl with pink cheeks and black bobbed hair and excited brown eyes.

"Did Jack send you?" she asked in a whisper.

He shook his head and the excitement died out of her face. Captain Crupper studied her in silence. She was pretty and very young: eighteen, he supposed, or nineteen, not more: she was dressed in a rather crumpled frock of a pretty shade of blue that showed signs of having been hastily put on. Her legs were bare. Her feet were thrust into soft velvet slippers. She frowned, and her small white teeth closed down over her lower lip.

"What are you doing here?" she asked.

"Well!" said Captain Crupper.

"Are you a friend of old Cargo's, or Mrs. Hennah's?"

"No," he said, "I'm not."

"What are you doing here, then?" she asked. "Listen! You've got to get me out of the house somehow. I'm not a slave, I keep telling 'em. And if Uncle Herman comes up here again, preaching at me, I'll brain him!"

There came to Captain Crupper's ears the sound of a motor-car travelling at high speed, approaching the house.

A look of determination was visible in the girl's face.

"That'll be Percy!" she said. Percy the Prune! Keep him away from me, or there'll be murder done, and it won't be me that'll be the corpse!"

The door closed and Captain Crupper turned and descended the stairs.

The stout lady, still in her stockinged feet, had removed her hat and was patting her fair hair and gazing at her reflection in a small mirror propped on her lap. Uncle Herman, the pale stout man in the tortoise-shell-rimmed spectacles and his shirt-sleeves, watched her, round-eyed.

He looked at Captain Crupper as he reached the foot of the stairs.

"Did you get her to see reason?" he asked. "She'd mebbe obey you where she wouldn't obey me."

"What makes you say that?" said Captain Crupper. "Listen! What's this?"

Someone was running up the pathway toward the house.

A thick-set, pasty-faced young man flung himself in through the open door, checked his rush, stared wildly at Captain Crupper and the stout blonde in pink, and then pointed his forefinger in the direction of Uncle Herman, who seemed to have shrunk two or three sizes smaller into his chair.

"Where is she?" he shouted. "Why the devil didn't you bring her along, you old goat?"

"Now, Percy!" said Uncle Herman in a weak voice. "That's no way to speak to a relative."

"Why didn't you put her into the car and bring her?"

"She wouldn't come," said Uncle Herman.

"Wouldn't *come!* My godfather!"

Captain Crupper studied him in amazement. Never before had he beheld anyone quite so magnificent in his apparel. This Percy, the young man with the pasty face and the goggling eyes and the fish-like mouth, might well have stepped straight out of a

shop window in the Strand, minus the price-ticket. He was the complete gent, from his glossy top-hat set well on the back of his sleek head to his black patent shoes and white spats. Nothing was missing, not even the white rosebud in his buttonhole or the diamond pin in the grey silk tie knotted so carefully under the wings of his tall white linen collar, or the silver-mounted ebony cane, or the grey suède gloves. His black morning coat and white waistcoat and grey striped trousers made Captain Crupper, who prided himself on his appearance, feel shabby and soiled and insignificant.

"Why wouldn't she come?" said Percy in a high, frightened voice. "Tell me. Why wouldn't she come?"

"She just wouldn't," said Uncle Herman. "She said she'd be—be——" He glanced apologetically through his great glasses at the stout lady in pink. "She said she'd be damned: begging your pardon, ma'am."

"Granted," said the stout lady, and powdered her nose.

"Bah!" said Percy. "She won't try any games with me!"

Captain Crupper stood on the third step up.

"Stop where you are!" he said.

"What's that?" said the pasty young man.

"You're not going upstairs!"

"Aren't I? Watch me and see!"

He placed his gloves and the silver-mounted cane on the round table and advanced on Captain Crupper, who, being a kind-hearted little man, had no wish to hurt him, and retreated two steps higher.

"Mister," he said, "let you and me talk things over."

The young man's response was to rush furiously up the stairs and throw his arms around him.

"Leggo!" said Captain Crupper.

He placed the palm of his right hand against the young man's face and shoved, at the same time with his left hand trying to break the grip on his body, the result being that the young man was forced backward and Captain Crupper himself lost his balance and pitched forward on top of him.

They rolled down the stairs, crashed against the round table, which was overturned, and wrestled furiously on the polished floor in the midst of broken china and red roses and a pool of water and white satin slippers and white silk stockings.

CAPTAIN CRUPPER freed himself and struggled to his knees. The pasty young man, seated with his back to the broken table, promptly hit him on the chin.

Captain Crupper, aghast, sat backward on to his heels.

"Oh!" he said, grimly. "Now you're asking for it!"

That he, a hard-case Western Ocean skipper, should have been hit by the pasty young man shook him to the very depths of his being. He was disgraced and humiliated.

The young man struck out again and missed.

Without rising to his feet, Captain Crupper caught hold of him by the shoulders and shook him.

"You play any more tricks with me," he said, "and I'll slap you, you dressed-up poodle!"

To use his fists was out of the question.

He heard someone say, "I'll help you," and saw out of the corner of his eye the stout blonde whose furniture they had damaged towering over them, the silver-mounted cane in her hand, raised to hit.

She hit.

Captain Crupper released his hold on the young man, dazed by the blow, dazzled by blinding flashes of light.

"Gosh!" he said.

"For Heaven's sake!" said the stout lady. "I meant to hit that Percy! Honest! Have I hurt you?"

Captain Crupper stood up.

"It's quite all right, ma'am," he said.

The pasty young man sat in the pool of water from the broken china bowl. At his feet lay the wreck of a once-immaculate top-hat. He thrust thumb and forefinger into his mouth, and said, thickly:—

"You've broken one of my crowns."

"Pleased with yourself?" said Captain Crupper.

The young man reached forward and picked up the hat. Never again would he know happiness!

"What did you want to interfere between me and my sister for?" he asked.

The girl called down from upstairs.

"Percy, you leave me out of it!"

"Didn't I tell you that girl was a wild cat?" said Uncle Herman. "I did, I bet!"

"Percy," said the girl, "go and tell that old thief Cargo I've changed my mind!"

The pasty young man sprang to his feet.

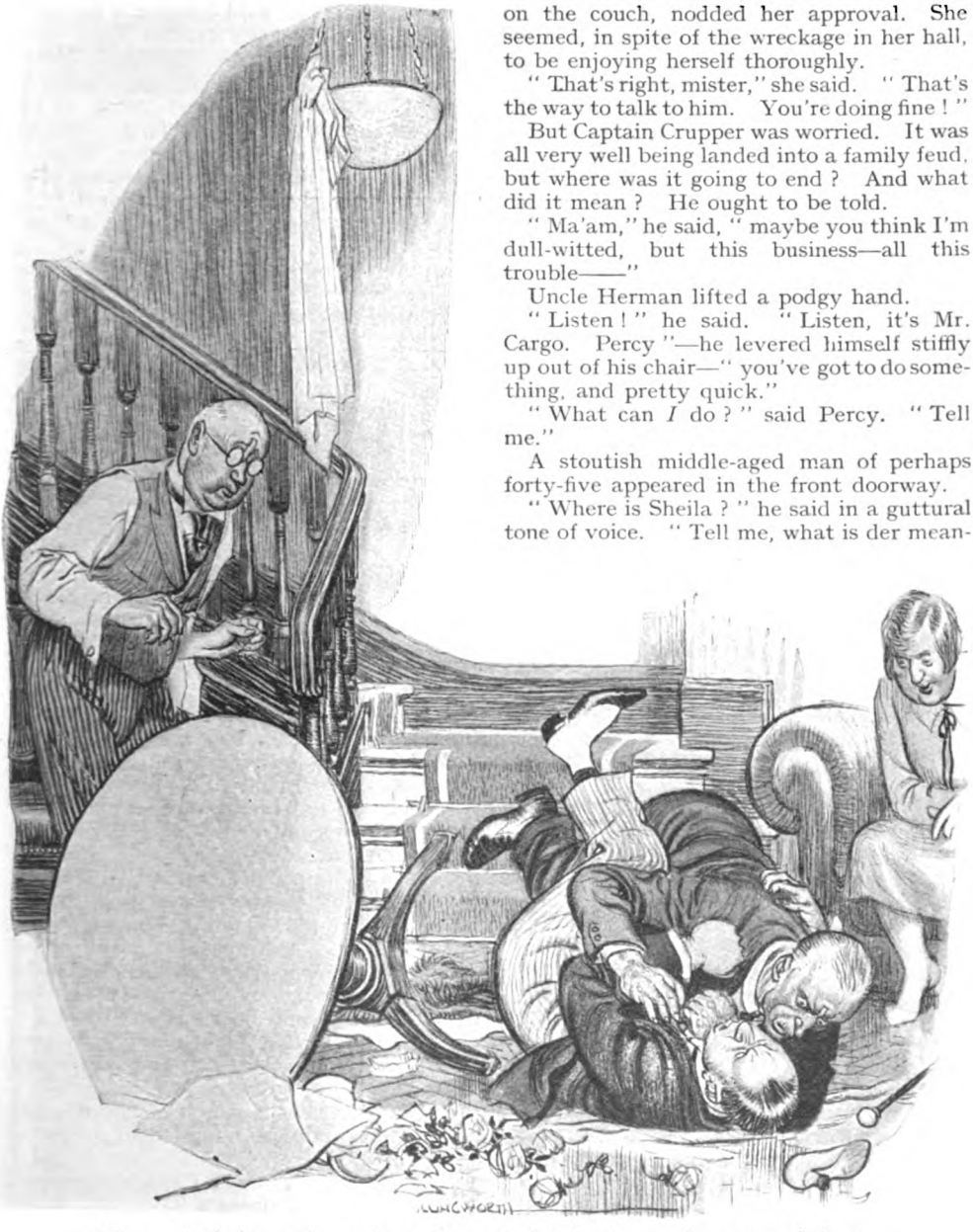
"Sheila!" he shouted. "You can't! You're crazy! Do you want to ruin the lot of us? You can't change your mind. So there!"

"Can't I just! Prove it!"

"Haven't you got your duty to'rds your family, Sheila?" said Uncle Herman.

"I don't give a damn if the family starves! I've got my own life to live, the same as anyone else. If you're such mugs you couldn't see what kind of a crook Cargo was, that's your fault, not mine."

"Think of all that money he loaned us!" said Percy.



They rolled down the stairs and wrestled furiously on the polished floor.

on the couch, nodded her approval. She seemed, in spite of the wreckage in her hall, to be enjoying herself thoroughly.

"That's right, mister," she said. "That's the way to talk to him. You're doing fine!"

But Captain Crupper was worried. It was all very well being landed into a family feud, but where was it going to end? And what did it mean? He ought to be told.

"Ma'am," he said, "maybe you think I'm dull-witted, but this business—all this trouble——"

Uncle Herman lifted a podgy hand.

"Listen!" he said. "Listen, it's Mr. Cargo. Percy"—he levered himself stiffly up out of his chair—"you've got to do something, and pretty quick."

"What can *I* do?" said Percy. "Tell me."

A stoutish middle-aged man of perhaps forty-five appeared in the front doorway.

"Where is Sheila?" he said in a guttural tone of voice. "Tell me, what is der meaning? Why could I not get through on der 'phone? Why am I kept waiting?"

"You give me shooting pains through the head!" said the sister.

Captain Crupper chuckled.

"And what's it to do with you, eh?" said Percy.

"Young man," said Captain Crupper, "you keep a civil tongue in your head, or maybe I'll be tempted to teach you manners."

The stout lady in pink, once more seated

And then, it seemed, he became aware of the broken table, the broken china bowl, the scattered roses, the pool of water, the Persian rug lying rucked up at the foot of the stairs, the broken glass and the picture, the stockings and shoes and the veil, and the battered top-hat.

" Gott ! " he said.

He had a black waxed moustache and prominent dark eyes and thick lips and a rapacious nose. He was dressed in the same kind of clothes as the pasty young man, even to the white spats and the top-hat.

" Percy," he said, " are you gone out of your mind ? Look at yourself in a glass. And where is Sheila ? " He uttered a stifled exclamation and pointed to the white satin frock suspended from the lamp hanging above their heads. " Her dress what I did buy ! And der stockings ! Gott ! Explain, one of you dummies, I insist ! "

" Mr. Cargo," said the pasty young man, " don't be angry, but I've got to tell you : Sheila won't come ! "

" Won't come ! " said Mr. Cargo. " Won't come ! "

CAPTAIN CRUPPER, standing once more on the stairs, ready to beat back any possible attack, saw two thin elderly ladies in black, a tall, melancholy man with a dark beard, a smart-looking young woman in a short-skirted frock of pale lilac, and a small girl in white with bobbed golden hair and a shrewd little face, all crowding in through the open door.

" What's all the fuss about ? " said the young woman in lilac. " Lord ! What's been happening ? "

" Rhoda," said the tall man with the beard, " hold your tongue ! "

" Did anyone have a fall ? " asked the thinner of the two ladies in black.

" Such a waste ! " said the other.

" Sheila won't come ! " said Mr. Cargo. Suddenly he burst out, furiously : " She won't, won't she ! Oh ! And I do nothing. Oh, do I ? At der last moment, der guests waiting, der refreshments on der table, der wine, der waiters, der orchestra, everything, and Sheila, if you please, she change her mind ! Very good ! I go see der young lady mineself ! "

" You won't ! " said Captain Crupper. " You may say what you like from here—in reason, of course—but you're not going upstairs ! " He looked in the direction of the stout blonde lady in pink. " Is he ? "

" He certainly isn't ! " said the stout lady, beaming. " You keep them vultures from that poor girl, mister ! You've got the law on your side, I know."

" Do you hear ? " said Captain Crupper.

" Who are you to say ' Do you hear ? ' " said Mr. Cargo, bristling. " I intend to see Sheila ! "

" Well, Sheila doesn't intend to see you," said the girl from upstairs. " Here, catch ! "

There came from the upper floor a shower of cardboard boxes, frocks, silk stockings, shoes, sunshades, hat boxes and hats, a pearl necklace, two gold bangles, a fur coat, and innumerable little leather cases that looked as though they might contain jewellery.

Mr. Cargo put his gloved hands to his forehead and groaned. A large bouquet of white lilies, flung with precision, knocked his top-hat off his head and revealed pink baldness. He shouted : " All that I have bought her ! " and made a rush for the stairs.

Captain Crupper laid a hand on his shoulder.

" Friend," he said, " don't spoil a pleasant day ! "

" Go fetch a policeman ! " said Mr Cargo. " Go fetch a policeman ! "

The little girl in white with the fair bobbed hair was bundled out on to the veranda, protesting.

" I won't go ! Make Rhoda go ! "

" Go call a policeman, Clarice," said the melancholy man with the beard, " and be quick about it ! "

" That kid's the limit ! " said Rhoda.

" Make haste, precious ! " said the thinner of the two elderly ladies.

" Then you can come straight back and see ! " said the other.

Captain Crupper smiled. They might call fifty policemen : he had, as the stout blonde lady in pink had said, the law on his side. It was at her request that he was guarding the girl called Sheila.

Mr. Cargo, red in the face, argued with Uncle Herman and Percy, the pasty young man, and the man with the beard. He shook his fist and stamped his foot. Uncle Herman patted him on the back and he shouted : " Don't paw me, Herman ! You hear what I say ! "

The stout blonde lady in pink, Captain Crupper noticed, took no part in the discussion. She seemed curiously aloof.

Mr. Cargo whirled about and gesticulated with both hands in Captain Crupper's direction.

" You, what business is it of you to come between me and der young lady I intend to marry ? "

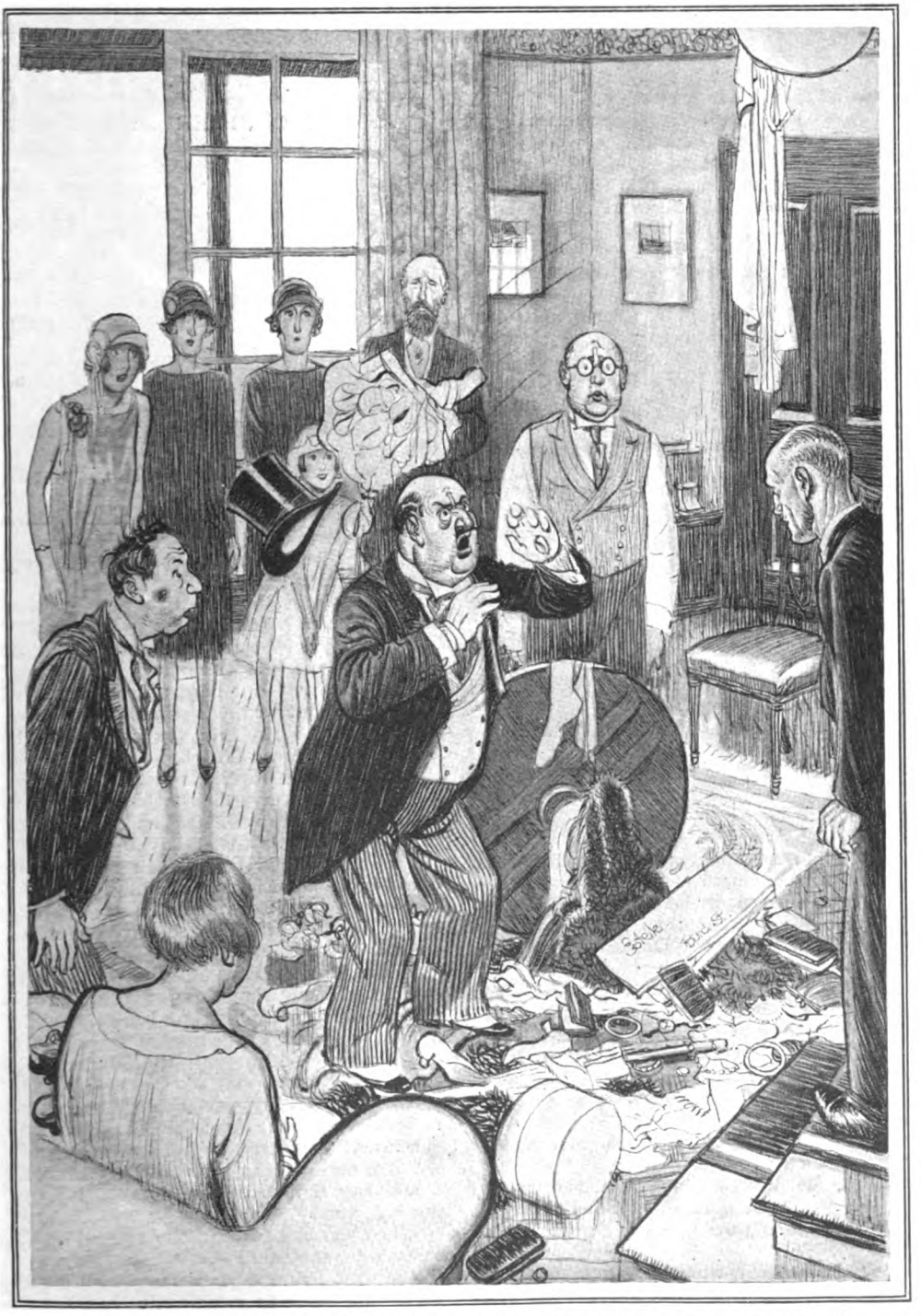
" The point is," said Captain Crupper, " the young lady doesn't intend to marry you."

" What's more," said the stout blonde lady, firmly, " you oughta be ashamed of yourself, a man your age, thinking of marrying for the third time ! "

" What ! " said Mr. Cargo.

" And with two grown-up daughters, too ! " said the stout lady.

" What are you talking about ? " said Mr. Cargo. " Two grown-up daughters ! Marrying for der third time ! Are you crazy ? "



A large bouquet of white lilies, flung with precision, knocked his top-hat off and revealed pink baldness.

The stout lady rose to her feet and laid a hand on his arm. He slapped at her plump wrist. She drew a long breath, closed her eyes, and wailed :—

" Oh, he hit me ! He hit me ! Maybe he's got a wife living already ! "

It was at this moment that the small girl arrived with the policeman.

" There ! " she said. " I fetched him ! "

" What's the trouble ? " said the policeman. He gazed about him at the wreckage on the floor and whistled. " Fighting ! " he said.

" This man hit me ! " said the stout lady. " Hit me ! "

" I didn't ! " said Mr. Cargo. His face was damp. " I'm going to be married, officer, and this man here——"

" That's a lie ! " said Captain Crupper. " You're not going to be married, and you know it ! "

" She won't have him," said the stout blonde lady.

" She's given him back his presents," said Captain Crupper. " Threw them at him ! "

The little girl with the fair bobbed hair squealed and was shaken by the thin elderly ladies in black, and at once broke into hysterical sobbing.

" Lena," said Mr. Cargo, fiercely, " put that child out of here this instant ! "

" I won't go ! " screamed the child. " I won't, I won't ! "

" Isn't that kid awful ? " said Rhoda.

" I can just see it all in to-morrow's papers," said Captain Crupper. " ' Young bride jilts elderly bridegroom and throws presents at him over banisters ! ' "

Rhoda began to giggle.

" We'll have our pictures on the front page ! Mrs. Hennah's, too ! "

Percy rounded on her savagely.

" Rhoda, you cut that out about Mrs. Hennah this minute ! Or else go on home and stay there ! "

" Fancy yourself, don't you ? " said Rhoda. " Here, take your ring back ! I've done with you ! You jelly-fish ! "

" I've not understood one word in ten ! " said the policeman. " What am I goin' to do ? Why did you send out an' fetch me, eh ? What for ? "

" It's an outrage ! " said Mr. Cargo. " An outrage ! "

Uncle Herman stood in the front doorway.

" Sheila ! " he gasped. " Sheila ! "

" What is it now ? " said Percy. " Out with it ! "

" Let me hear what he's got to say ! " said Mr. Cargo. " What's got you, Herman ? "

" Sheila's climbed down from her window and run away. I saw her crossing the lawn. That Jack Hosken's got his car in front of the house ! Quick ! "

There followed a wild stampede for the door, headed by Mr. Cargo.

CAPTAIN CRUPPER and the stout blonde lady in pink stared at each other blankly across the *débris* of broken glass and china and cardboard boxes and hats and silk stockings.

" Well ! " said Captain Crupper. " Well ! "

" Crazy, the lot of 'em ! " said the stout lady.

" That Mr. Cargo, I take it, was bent on marrying without letting his daughters know ! "

The stout lady grinned frankly.

" I didn't even know he had any daughters ! "

" You said so, didn't you ? " said Captain Crupper.

" Sure I did ! You helped me, I wanted to help you ! "

" Tell me, then : who were all those people in here ? "

" I was just going to ask you the very same question ! "

" Me ! " said Captain Crupper. " How should I know ? It's your house, anyway ! "

" *My* house ! " said the stout lady. " Of course it's not ! I thought it was yours ! We've not lived out here only a couple of days, and what with the sun and not knowing my way I got into the wrong street ! That's how it was. You did the rest."

Both glanced hastily toward the door.

" They must have thought we were guests invited to that wedding," said the stout lady. " Friends of that Sheila."

" Listen ! " said Captain Crupper. " In one minute that bunch of lunatics will be coming back ! Let's try if there's a way out at the back of the house. Are you rested enough ? "

" Sure," said the stout lady. " Me feet's swelled on me something fierce and I'll have to carry me shoes, but I ain't stopping here to face that Cargo; not if I know it ! "

They tip-toed through the kitchen into the back garden.

As Captain Crupper helped the stout lady to climb the fence she gave way to gurgles of laughter.

" I dunno what in the world my husband would say if he seen me now ! I forgot my hat, too ! "

When she had reached the ground on the other side, she said :—

" Mister, I dunno your name, and maybe we're not going to meet again, but I want to tell you I've never enjoyed anything so much in all my life as this afternoon ! "

G. WODEHOUSE A. CONAN DOYL
le VERE STACPOOLE H. A. VACHEL

SEP 6 1924

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THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for September, 1927.

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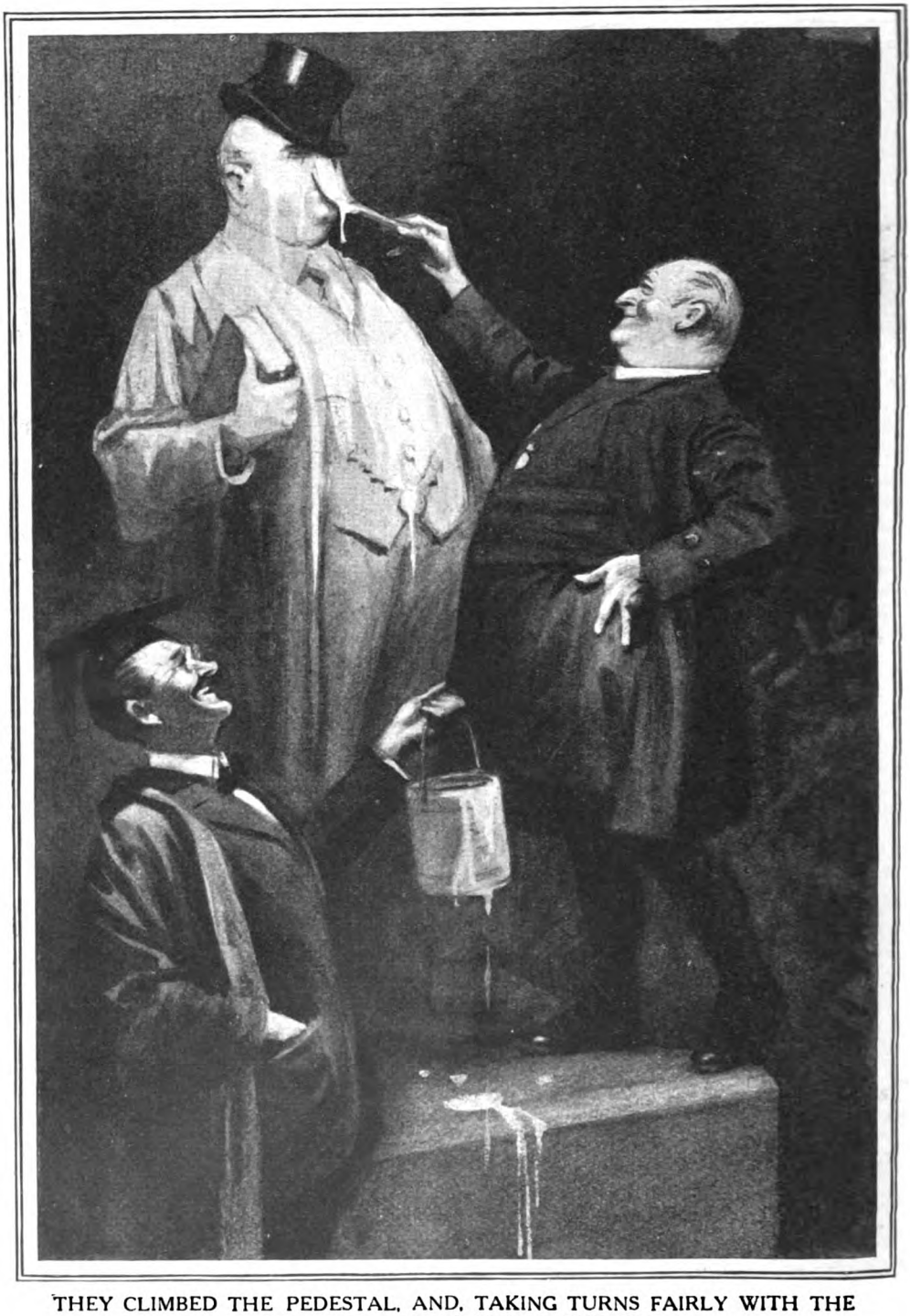

THEY CLIMBED THE PEDESTAL, AND, TAKING TURNS FAIRLY WITH THE BRUSH, SOON ACCOMPLISHED THE TASK.

(See page 220.)

The Bishop's Move

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

Illustrated by
CHARLES CROMBIE

ANOTHER Sunday was drawing to a close, and Mr. Mulliner had come into the bar-parlour of the Angler's Rest wearing on his head, in place of the seedy old wideawake which usually adorned it, a glistening top-hat. From this, combined with the sober black of his costume and the rather devout voice in which he ordered hot Scotch and lemon, I deduced that he had been attending Evensong.

"Good sermon?" I asked.

"Quite good. The new curate preached. He seems a nice young fellow."

"Speaking of curates," I said, "I have often wondered what became of your nephew, the one you were telling me about the other day."

"Augustine?"

"The fellow who took the Buck-u-Uppo."

"That was Augustine. And I am pleased and not a little touched," said Mr. Mulliner, beaming, "that you should have remembered the trivial anecdote which I related. In this self-centred world one does not always find such a sympathetic listener to one's stories. Let me see, where did we leave Augustine?"

"He had just become the Bishop's secretary and gone to live at the Palace."

"Ah, yes. We will take up his career, then, some six months after the date which you have indicated."

IT was the custom of the good Bishop of Stortford—for, like all the prelates of our Church, he loved his labours—to embark upon the duties of the day (said Mr. Mulliner) in a cheerful and jocund spirit. Usually, as he entered his study to dispatch such business as might have arisen from the correspondence which had reached the Palace by the first post, there was a smile upon his face, and possibly upon his lips a snatch of some gay psalm. But on the morning on which this story begins an observer would have noted that he wore a preoccupied, even a sombre, look. Reaching the study door, he hesitated as if reluctant to enter; then, pulling himself together with a visible effort, he turned the handle.

"Good morning, Mulliner, my boy," he said.

Augustine glanced brightly up from the pile of letters which he was opening.

"Cheerio, Bish. How's the lumbago to-day?"

"I find the pain sensibly diminished, thank you, Mulliner—in fact, almost non-existent. This pleasant weather seems to do me good. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. Song of Solomon ii. 11, 12."

"Good work," said Augustine. "Well, there's nothing much of interest in these letters so far. The Vicar of St. Beowulf's in the West wants to know how about incense?"

"Tell him he mustn't."

"Right-ho."

The Bishop stroked his chin uneasily. He seemed to be nerving himself for some unpleasant task.

"Mulliner," he said.

"Hullo?"

"Your mention of the word 'vicar' provides a cue, which I must not ignore, for alluding to a matter which you and I had under advisement yesterday—the matter of the vacant living of Steeple Mummery."

"Yes?" said Augustine, eagerly. "Do I click?"

A spasm of pain passed across the Bishop's face. He shook his head sadly.

"Mulliner, my boy," he said, "you know that I look upon you as a son, and that, left to my own initiative, I would bestow

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this vacant living on you without a moment's hesitation. But an unforeseen complication has arisen. Unhappy lad, my wife has instructed me to give the post to a cousin of hers. A fellow," said the Bishop, bitterly, " who bleats like a sheep and doesn't know an alb from a reredos."

Augustine, as was only natural, was conscious of a momentary pang of disappointment. But he was a Mulliner and a sportsman.

" Don't give it another thought, Bish," he said, cordially. " I quite understand. I don't say I hadn't hopes, but no doubt there will be another along in a minute."

" You know how it is," said the Bishop, looking cautiously round to see that the door was closed. " It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house. Proverbs xxi. 9."

" A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike. Proverbs xxvii. 15," agreed Augustine.

" Exactly. How well you understand me, Mulliner."

" Meanwhile," said Augustine, holding up a letter, " here's something that calls for attention. It's from a bird of the name of Trevor Entwhistle."

" Indeed ? An old schoolfellow of mine. He is now Headmaster of Harchester, the foundation at which we both received our early education. What does he say ? "

" He wants to know if you will run down for a few days and unveil a statue which they have just put up to Lord Hemel of Hempstead."

" Another old schoolfellow. We called him Fatty."

" There's a postscript over the page. He says he still has a dozen of the '87 port."

The Bishop pursed his lips.

" These earthly considerations do not weigh with me so much as old Catsmeat—as the Reverend Trevor Entwhistle seems to suppose. However, one must not neglect the call of the dear old school. We will certainly go."

" We ? "

" I shall require your company. I think you will like Harchester, Mulliner. A noble pile, founded by the seventh Henry."

" I know it well. A young brother of mine is there."

" Indeed ? Dear me," mused the Bishop, " it must be twenty years and more since I last visited Harchester. I shall enjoy seeing the old, familiar scenes once again. After all, Mulliner, to whatever eminence we may soar, howsoever great may be the prizes which life has bestowed upon us, we never wholly lose our sentiment for the dear old school. It is our Alma Mater, Mulliner, the gentle mother that has set our hesitating footsteps on the——"

" Absolutely," said Augustine.

" And, as we grow older, we see that never can we recapture the old, careless gaiety of our school days. Life was not complex then, Mulliner. Life in that halcyon period was free from problems. We were not faced with the necessity of disappointing our friends——"

" Now, listen, Bish," said Augustine, cheerily; " if you're still worrying about that living, forget it. Look at me. I'm quite chirpy, aren't I ? "

The Bishop sighed.

" I wish I had your sunny resilience, Mulliner. How do you manage it ? "

" Oh, I keep smiling, and take the Buck-u-Uppo daily."

" The Buck-u-Uppo ? "

" It's a tonic my uncle Wilfred invented. Works like magic."

" I must ask you to let me try it one of these days. For somehow, Mulliner, I am finding life a little grey. What on earth," said the Bishop, half to himself and speaking peevishly, " they wanted to put up a statue to old Fatty for, I can't imagine. A fellow who used to throw inked darts at people. However," he continued, abruptly abandoning this train of thought, " that is neither here nor there. If the Board of Governors of Harchester College has decided that Lord Hemel of Hempstead has by his services in the public weal earned a statue, it is not for us to cavil. Write to Mr. Entwhistle, Mulliner, and say that I shall be delighted."

ALTHOUGH, as he had told Augustine, fully twenty years had passed since his last visit to Harchester, the Bishop found, somewhat to his surprise, that little or no alteration had taken place in the grounds, buildings, and personnel of the school. It seemed to him almost precisely the same as it had been on the day, forty-three years before, when he had first come there as a new boy.

There was the tuck-shop where, a lissom stripling with bony elbows, he had shoved and pushed so often in order to get near the counter and snaffle a jam-sandwich in the eleven o'clock recess. There were the baths, the fives courts, the football fields, the library, the gymnasium, the gravel, the chestnut trees, all just as they had been when the only thing he knew about Bishops was that they wore bootlaces in their hats.

The sole change that he could see was that on the triangle of turf in front of the library there had been erected a granite pedestal surmounted by a shapeless something swathed in a large sheet—the statue of

Lord Hemel of Hempstead which he had come down to unveil.

And gradually, as his visit proceeded, there began to steal over him an emotion which defied analysis.

At first he supposed it to be a natural sentimentality. But, had it been that, would it not have been a more pleasurable emotion ? For his feelings had begun to be far from unmixedly agreeable. Once, when, rounding a corner, he came upon the captain of football in all his majesty, there had swept over him a hideous blend of fear and shame which made his gaitered legs wobble like jellies. The captain of football doffed his cap respectfully, and the feeling passed as quickly as it had come ; but not so soon that the Bishop had not recognized it. It was exactly the feeling he had been wont to have forty-odd years ago when, sneaking softly away from football practice, he had encountered one in authority.

The Bishop was puzzled. It was as if some fairy had touched him with her wand, sweeping away the years and making him an inky-faced boy again. Day by day this illusion grew, the constant society of the Rev. Trevor Entwhistle doing much to foster it. For young Catsmeat Entwhistle had been the Bishop's particular crony at Harchester, and he seemed to have altered his appearance since those days in no way whatsoever. The Bishop had had a nasty shock when, entering the Headmaster's study on the third morning of his visit, he found him sitting in the Headmaster's chair with the Headmaster's cap and gown on. It had seemed to him that young Catsmeat, in order to indulge his distorted sense of humour, was taking the most frightful risk. Suppose the Old Man were to come in and cop him !

Altogether, it was a relief to the Bishop when the day of the unveiling arrived.

THE actual ceremony, however, he found both tedious and irritating. Lord Hemel of Hempstead had not been a favourite of his in their school days, and there was something extremely disagreeable to him in being obliged to roll out sonorous periods in his praise.

In addition to this, he had suffered from the very start of the proceedings from a bad attack of stage fright. He could not help thinking that he must look the most awful ass, standing up there in front of all those people and spouting. He half expected one of the prefects in the audience to step up and clout his head and tell him not to be a funny young swine.

However, no disaster of this nature occurred. Indeed, his speech was notably successful.

" My dear Bishop," said old General Bloodenough, the Chairman of the College Board of Governors, shaking his hand at the conclusion of the unveiling, " your magnificent oration put my own feeble efforts to shame, put them to shame, to shame. You were astounding ! "

" Thanks awfully," mumbled the Bishop, blushing and shuffling his feet.

The weariness which had come upon the Bishop as the result of the prolonged ceremony seemed to grow as the day wore on. By the time he was seated in the Headmaster's study after dinner he was in the grip of a severe headache.

The Rev. Trevor Entwhistle also appeared jaded.

" These affairs are somewhat fatiguing, Bishop," he said, stifling a yawn.

" They are, indeed, Headmaster."

" Even the '87 port seems an inefficient restorative."

" Markedly inefficient. I wonder," said the Bishop, struck with an idea, " if a little Buck-u-Uppo might not alleviate our exhaustion ? It is a tonic of some kind which my secretary is in the habit of taking. It certainly appears to do him good. A livelier, more vigorous young fellow I have never seen. Suppose we ask your butler to go to his room and borrow the bottle ? I am sure he will be delighted to give it to us."

" By all means."

The butler, dispatched to Augustine's room, returned with a bottle half full of a thick, dark-coloured liquid. The Bishop examined it thoughtfully.

" I see there are no directions given as to the requisite dose," he said. " However, I do not like to keep disturbing your butler, who has now doubtless returned to his pantry and is once more settling down to the enjoyment of a well-earned rest after a day more than ordinarily fraught with toil and anxiety. Suppose we use our own judgment ? "

" Certainly. Is it nasty ? "

The Bishop licked the cork warily.

" No. I should not call it nasty. The taste, while individual and distinctive and even striking, is by no means disagreeable."

" Then let us take a glassful apiece."

The Bishop filled two portly wine-glasses with the fluid, and they sat sipping gravely.

" It's rather good," said the Bishop.

" Distinctly good," said the Headmaster.

" It sort of sends a kind of glow over you."

" A noticeable glow."

" A little more, Headmaster ? "

" No, I thank you."

" Oh, come."

" Well, just a spot, Bishop, if you insist."

" It's rather good," said the Bishop.

"Distinctly good," said the Headmaster.

Now you, who have listened to the story of Augustine's previous adventures with the Buck-u-Uppo, are aware that my brother Wilfred invented it primarily with the object of providing Indian Rajahs with a specific which would encourage their elephants to face the tiger of the jungle with a jaunty *sang-froid;* and he had advocated as a medium dose for an adult elephant a teaspoonful stirred up with its morning bran-mash. It is not surprising, therefore, that after they had drunk two wineglassfuls apiece of the mixture the outlook on life of both the Bishop and the Headmaster began to undergo a marked change.

Their fatigue had left them, and with it the depression which a few moments before had been weighing on them so heavily. Both were conscious of an extraordinary feeling of good cheer, and the odd illusion of extreme youth which had been upon the Bishop since his arrival at Harchester was now more pronounced than ever. He felt a youngish and rather rowdy fifteen.

"Where does your butler sleep, Catsmeat?" he asked, after a thoughtful pause.

"I don't know. Why?"

"I was only thinking that it would be a lark to go and put a booby-trap on his door."

The Headmaster's eyes glistened.

"Yes, wouldn't it?" he said.

They mused for awhile. Then the Headmaster uttered a deep chuckle.

"What are you giggling about?" asked the Bishop.

"I was only thinking what a priceless ass you looked this afternoon, talking all that rot about old Fatty."

In spite of his cheerfulness, a frown passed over the Bishop's fine forehead.

"It went very much against the grain to speak in terms of eulogy—yes, fulsome eulogy—of one whom we both know to have been a blighter of the worst description. Where does Fatty get off, having statues put up to him?"

"Oh, well, he's an Empire-builder, I suppose," said the Headmaster, who was a fair-minded man.

"Just the sort of thing he would be," grumbled the Bishop. "Shoving himself forward! If ever there was a chap I barred, it was Fatty."

"Me, too," agreed the Headmaster. "Beastly laugh he'd got. Like glue pouring out of a jug."

"Greedy little beast, if you remember. A fellow in his house told me he once ate three slices of brown boot-polish spread on bread after he had finished the potted meat."

"Between you and me, I always suspected him of swiping buns at the school shop. I don't wish to make rash charges unsupported by true evidence, but it always seemed to me extremely odd that, whatever time of the term it was and however hard up everybody else might be, you never saw Fatty without his bun."

"Catsmeat," said the Bishop, "I'll tell you something about Fatty that isn't generally known. In a scrum in the final House Match in the year 1888 he deliberately hoofed me on the shin."

"You don't mean that?"

"I do."

"Great Scott!"

"An ordinary hack on the shin," said the Bishop, coldly, "no fellow minds. It is part of the give-and-take of normal social life. But when a bounder deliberately hauls off and lets drive at you with the sole intention of laying you out, it—well, it's a bit thick."

"And those chumps of Governors have put up a statue to him!"

The Bishop leaned forward and lowered his voice.

"Catsmeat!"

"What?"

"Do you know what?"

"No, what?"

"What we ought to do is to wait till twelve o'clock or so, till there's no one about, and then beetle out and paint that statue blue."

"Why not pink?"

"Pink, if you prefer it."

"Pink's a nice colour."

"It is. Very nice."

"Besides, I know where I can lay my hands on some pink paint."

"You do?"

"Gobs of it."

"Peace be within thy walls, Catsmeat, and prosperity within thy palaces," said the Bishop. "Psalms cxxii. 7."

IT seemed to the Bishop, as he closed the front door noiselessly behind him two hours later, that Providence, always on the side of the just, was extending itself in its efforts to make this little enterprise of his a success. All the conditions were admirable for statue-painting. The rain which had been falling during the evening had stopped; and a moon, which might have proved an embarrassment, was conveniently hidden behind a bank of clouds.

As regarded human interference, they had nothing to alarm them. No place in the world is so deserted as the grounds of a school after midnight. Fatty's statue might have been in the middle of the Sahara. They climbed the pedestal; and, taking turns fairly with the brush, soon accomplished

the task which their sense of duty had indicated to them. It was only when, treading warily lest their steps should be heard on the gravel drive, they again reached the front door that anything occurred to mar the harmony of the proceedings.

"What are you waiting for?" whispered the Bishop, as his companion lingered on the top step.

"Half a second," said the Headmaster in a muffled voice. "It may be in another pocket."

"What?"

"My key."

"Have you lost your key?"

"I believe I have."

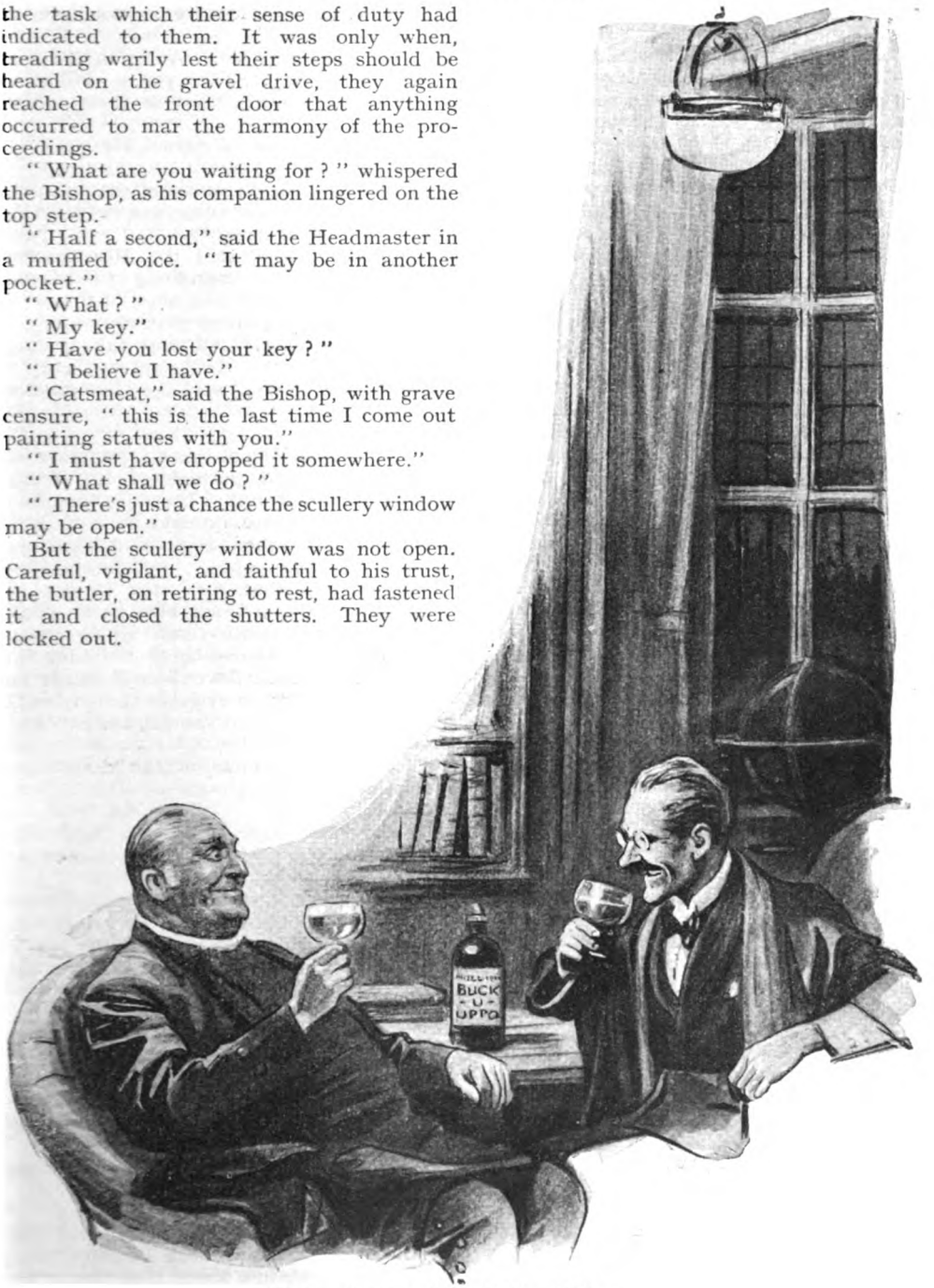
"Catsmeat," said the Bishop, with grave censure, "this is the last time I come out painting statues with you."

"I must have dropped it somewhere."

"What shall we do?"

"There's just a chance the scullery window may be open."

But the scullery window was not open. Careful, vigilant, and faithful to his trust, the butler, on retiring to rest, had fastened it and closed the shutters. They were locked out.



"It's rather good," said the Bishop.
"Distinctly good," said the Headmaster.

But it has been well said that it is the lessons which we learn in our boyhood days at school that prepare us for the problems of life in the larger world outside. Stealing back from the mists of the past, there came to the Bishop a sudden memory.

"Catsmeat!"

"Hullo?"

"If you haven't been mucking the place up with alterations and improvements, there should be a water-pipe round at the back, leading to one of the upstairs windows."

Memory had not played him false. There, nestling in the ivy, was the pipe up and down which he had been wont to climb when, a pie-faced lad in the summer of '86, he had broken out of this house in order to take nocturnal swims in the river.

"Up you go," he said, briefly.

The Headmaster required no further urging. And presently the two were making good time up the side of the house.

It was just as they reached the window, and just after the Bishop had informed his old friend that, if he kicked him on the head again, he'd hear of it, that the window was suddenly flung open.

"Who's that?" said a clear young voice.

The Headmaster was frankly taken aback. Dim though the light was, he could see that the man leaning out of the window was poising in readiness a very nasty-looking golf-club; and his first impulse was to reveal his identity and so clear himself of the suspicion of being the marauder for whom he gathered the other had mistaken him. Then there presented themselves to him certain objections to revealing his identity, and he hung there in silence, unable to think of a suitable next move.

The Bishop was a man of readier resource.

"Tell him we're a couple of cats belonging to the cook," he whispered.

It was painful for one of the Headmaster's scrupulous rectitude and honesty to stoop to such a falsehood, but it seemed the only course to pursue.

"It's all right," he said, forcing a note of easy geniality into his voice. "We're a couple of cats."

"Cat-burglars?"

"No. Just ordinary cats."

"Belonging to the cook," prompted the Bishop from below.

"Belonging to the cook," added the Headmaster.

"I see," said the man at the window. "Well, in that case, right-ho!"

He stood aside to allow them to enter. The Bishop, an artist at heart, mewed gratefully as he passed, to add verisimilitude to the deception; and then made for his bedroom, accompanied by the Headmaster. The episode was apparently closed.

Nevertheless, the Headmaster was disturbed by a certain uneasiness.

"Do you suppose he thought we really were cats?" he asked, anxiously.

"I am not sure," said the Bishop. "But I think we deceived him by the nonchalance of our demeanour."

"Yes, I think we did. Who was he?"

"My secretary. The young fellow I was speaking of, who lent us that capital tonic."

"Oh, then that's all right. He wouldn't give you away."

"No. And there is nothing else that can possibly lead to our being suspected. We left no clue whatsoever."

"All the same," said the Headmaster, thoughtfully, "I'm beginning to wonder whether it was in the best sense of the word judicious to have painted that statue."

"Somebody had to," said the Bishop, stoutly.

"Yes, that's true," said the Headmaster, brightening.

THE BISHOP slept late on the following morning, and partook of his frugal breakfast in bed. The day, which so often brings remorse, brought none to him. Something attempted, something done had earned a night's repose; and he had no regrets—except that, now that it was all over, he was not sure that blue paint would not have been more effective. However, his old friend had pleaded so strongly for the pink that it would have been difficult for himself, as a guest, to override the wishes of his host. Still, blue would undoubtedly have been very striking.

There was a knock on the door, and Augustine entered.

"Morning, Bish."

"Good morning, Mulliner," said the Bishop, affably. "I have lain somewhat late to-day."

"I say, Bish," asked Augustine, a little anxiously, "did you take a very big dose of the Buck-u-Uppo last night?"

"Big? No. As I recollect, quite small. Barely two ordinary wineglasses full."

"Great Scott!"

"Why do you ask, my dear fellow?"

"Oh, nothing. No particular reason. I just thought your manner seemed a little strange on the water-pipe, that's all."

The Bishop was conscious of a touch of chagrin.

"Then you saw through our—er—innocent deception?"

"Yes."

"I had been taking a little stroll with the Headmaster," explained the Bishop, "and he had mislaid his key. How beautiful is Nature at night, Mulliner! The dark, fathomless skies—the little winds that seem to whisper secrets in one's ear—the scent of growing things——"

"Yes," said Augustine. He paused. "Rather a row on this morning. Somebody

appears to have painted Lord Hemel of Hempstead's statue last night."

"Indeed?"

"Yes."

"Ah, well," said the Bishop, tolerantly, "boys will be boys."

"It's a most mysterious business."

"No doubt, no doubt. But, after all, Mulliner, is not all life a mystery?"

"And what makes it still more mysterious is that they found your shovel-hat on the statue's head."

The Bishop started up.

"What!"

"Absolutely."

"Mulliner," said the Bishop, "leave me. I have one or two matters on which I wish to meditate."

He dressed hastily, his numbed fingers fumbling with his gaiters. It all came back to him now. Yes, he could remember putting the hat on the statue's head. It had seemed a good thing to do at the time, and he had done it. How little we guess at the moment how far-reaching our most trivial actions may be!

THE HEADMASTER was over at the school, instructing the Sixth form in Greek Composition; and the Bishop was obliged to wait, chafing, until twelve-thirty, when the bell rang for the half-way halt in the day's work. He stood at the study window, watching with ill-controlled impatience, and presently the Headmaster appeared, walking heavily like one on whose mind there is a weight.

"Well?" cried the Bishop, as he entered the study.

The Headmaster doffed his cap and gown, and sank limply into a chair.

"I cannot conceive," he groaned, "what madness had me in its grip last night."

The Bishop was shaken, but he could not countenance such an attitude as this.

"I do not understand you, Headmaster," he said, stiffly. "It was our simple duty, as a protest against the undue exaltation of one whom we both know to have been a most unpleasant schoolmate, to paint that statue."

"And I suppose it was your duty to leave your hat on its head?"

"Now there," said the Bishop, "I may possibly have gone a little too far." He coughed. "Has that perhaps somewhat ill-considered action led to the harbouring of suspicions by those in authority?"

"They don't know what to think."

"What is the view of the Board of Governors?"

"They insist on my finding the culprit. Should I fail to do so, they hint at the gravest consequences."

"You mean they will deprive you of your headmastership?"

"That is what they imply. I shall be asked to hand in my resignation. And, if that happens, bim goes my chance of ever being a Bishop."

"Well, it's not all jam being a Bishop. You wouldn't enjoy it, Catsmeat."

"All very well for you to talk, Boko. You got me into this, you silly ass."

"I like that! You were just as keen on it as I was."

"You suggested it."

"Well, you jumped at the suggestion."

The two men had faced each other heatedly and for a moment it seemed as if there was to be a serious falling-out. Then the Bishop recovered himself.

"Catsmeat," he said, with that wonderful smile of his, taking the other's hand, "this is unworthy of us. We must not quarrel. We must put our heads together and see if there is not some avenue of escape from the unfortunate position in which, however creditable our motives, we appear to have placed ourselves. How would it be——?"

"I thought of that," said the Headmaster. "It wouldn't do a bit of good. Of course, we might——"

"No, that's no use, either," said the Bishop.

They sat for awhile in meditative silence. And, as they sat, the door opened.

"General Bloodenough," announced the butler.

"Oh, that I had wings like a dove—Psalm lv. 6." muttered the Bishop.

His desire to be wafted from that spot with all available speed could hardly be considered unreasonable. General Sir Hector Bloodenough, V.C., K.C.I.E., M.V.O., on retiring from the Army, had been for many years, until his final return to England, in charge of the Secret Service in Western Africa, where his unerring acumen had won for him from the natives the sobriquet of Wah-nah-B'gosh-B'jingo—which, freely translated, means Big Chief Who Can See Through the Hole in a Doughnut.

A man impossible to deceive. The last man the Bishop would have wished to be conducting the present investigations.

The General stalked into the room. He had keen blue eyes, topped by bushy white eyebrows; and the Bishop found his gaze far too piercing to be agreeable.

"Bad business, this," he said. "Bad business. Bad business."

"It is, indeed," faltered the Bishop.

"Shocking bad business. Shocking. Shocking. Do you know what we found on the head of that statue, eh? That statue, that statue? Your hat, Bishop. Your hat. Your hat."

The Bishop made an attempt to rally. His mind was in a whirl, for the General's habit of repeating everything three times had the effect on him of making his last night's escapade seem three times as bad. He now saw himself on the verge of standing convicted of having painted three statues with three pots of pink paint, and of having placed on the head of each one of a trio of shovel-hats. But he was a strong man, and he did his best.

"You say my hat?" he retorted with spirit. "How do you know it was my hat? There may have been hundreds of Bishops dodging about the school grounds last night."

"Got your name in it. Your name. Your name."

The Bishop clutched at the arm of the chair in which he sat. The General's eyes were piercing him through and through, and every moment he felt more like a rabbit that has had the misfortune to attract the attention of a snake. He was on the point of protesting that the writing in the hat was probably a forgery, when there was a tap at the door.

"Come in," cried the Headmaster, who had been cowering in his seat.

There entered a small boy in an Eton suit, whose face seemed to the Bishop vaguely familiar. It was a face that closely resembled a ripe tomato with a nose stuck on it, but that was not what had struck the Bishop. It was of something other than tomatoes that this lad reminded him.

"Sir, please, sir," said the boy.

"Yes, yes, yes," said General Blood-enough, testily. "Run away, my boy, run away, run away. Can't you see we're busy?"

"But, sir, please, sir, it's about the statue."

"What about the statue? What about it? What about it?"

"Sir, please, sir, it was me."

"What! What! What! What! What!"

The Bishop, the General, and the Headmaster had spoken simultaneously; and the "Whats" had been distributed as follows:—

The Bishop	.....	1
The General	.....	3
The Headmaster	.....	1

making five in all. Having uttered these ejaculations, they continued to stare at the boy, who turned a brighter vermilion.

"What are you saying?" cried the Headmaster. "You painted that statue?"

"Sir, yes, sir."

"You?" said the Bishop.

"Sir, yes, sir."

"You? You? You?" said the General.

"Sir, yes, sir."

There was a quivering pause. The Bishop looked at the Headmaster. The Headmaster looked at the Bishop. The General looked at the boy. The boy looked at the floor.

The General was the first to speak.

"Monstrous!" he exclaimed. "Monstrous! Monstrous! Never heard of such a thing. This boy must be expelled, Headmaster. Expelled. Ex——"

"No!" said the Headmaster, in a ringing voice.

"Then flogged within an inch of his life. Within an inch. An inch."

"No!" A strange new dignity seemed to have descended upon the Rev. Trevor Entwhistle. He was breathing a little quickly through his nose, and his eyes had assumed a somewhat prawn-like aspect. "In matters of school discipline, General, I must with all deference claim to be paramount. I will deal with this case as I think best. In my opinion this is not an occasion for severity. You agree with me, Bishop?"

The Bishop came to himself with a start. He had been thinking of an article which he had just completed for a leading review on the subject of miracles, and was regretting that the tone he had taken, though in keeping with the trend of modern thought, had been tinged with something approaching scepticism.

"Oh, entirely," he said.

"Then all I can say," fumed the General, "is that I wash my hands of the whole business, the whole business, the whole business. And, if this is the way our boys are being brought up nowadays, no wonder the country is going to the dogs, the dogs, going to the dogs."

The door slammed behind him. The Headmaster turned to the boy, a kindly, winning smile upon his face.

"No doubt," he said, "you now regret this rash act?"

"Sir, yes, sir."

"And you would not do it again?"

"Sir, no, sir."

"Then I think," said the Headmaster, cheerily, "that we may deal leniently with what, after all, was but a boyish prank. Eh, Bishop?"

"Oh, decidedly, Headmaster."

"Quite the sort of thing—ha, ha!—that you or I might have done—er—at his age?"

"Oh, quite."

"Then you shall write me twenty lines of Virgil, Mulliner, and we will say no more about it."

The Bishop sprang from his chair.

"Mulliner! Did you say Mulliner?"

"Yes."

"I have a secretary of that name. Are you, by any chance, a relation of his, my lad?"

"Sir, yes, sir. Brother."

"Oh!" said the Bishop.

THE BISHOP found Augustine in the garden, squirting whale-oil solution on the rose-bushes, for he was an enthusiastic horticulturist. He placed an affectionate hand on his shoulder.

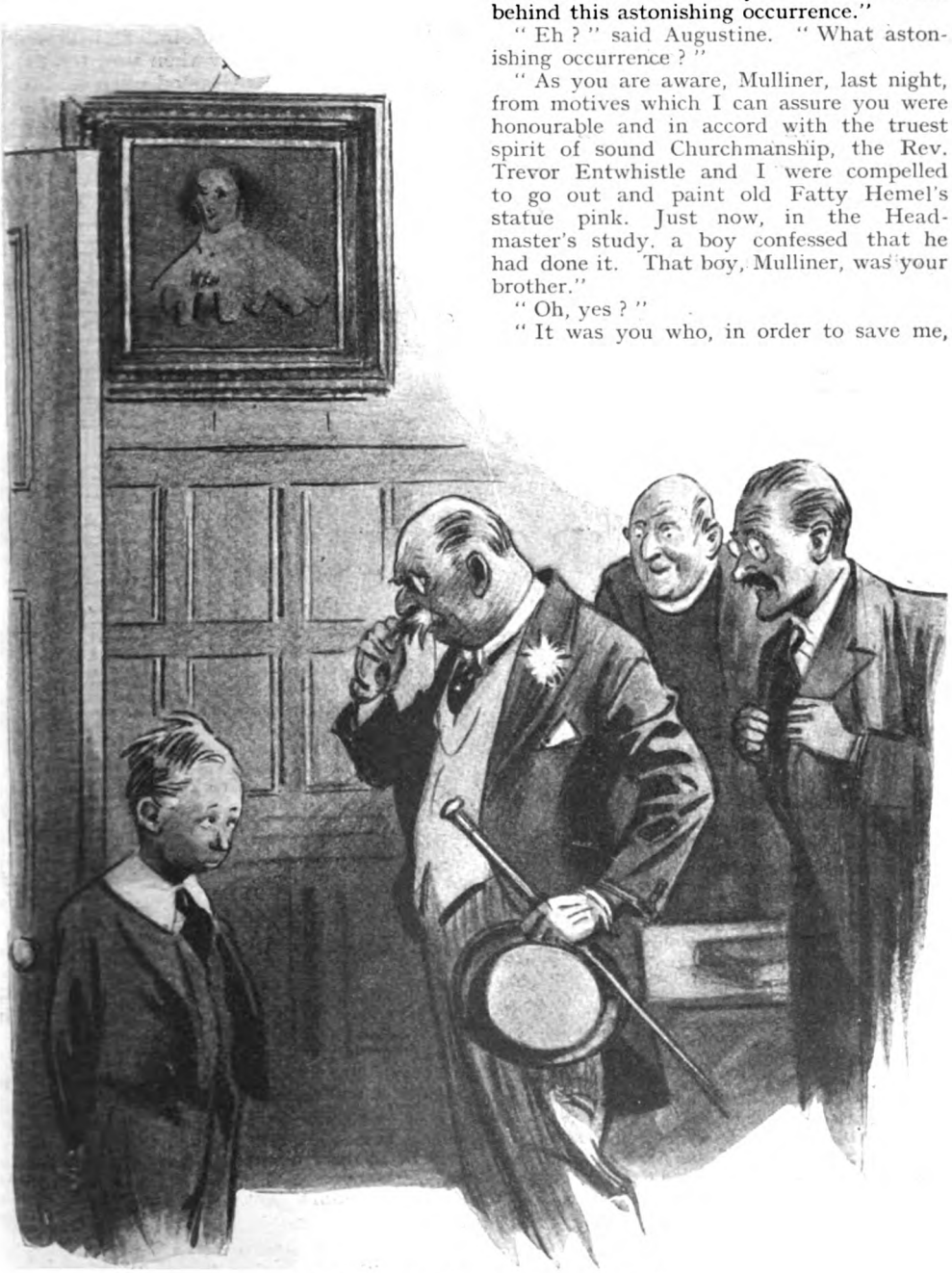
"Mulliner," he said, "do not think that I have not detected your hidden hand behind this astonishing occurrence."

"Eh?" said Augustine. "What astonishing occurrence?"

"As you are aware, Mulliner, last night, from motives which I can assure you were honourable and in accord with the truest spirit of sound Churchmanship, the Rev. Trevor Entwhistle and I were compelled to go out and paint old Fatty Hemel's statue pink. Just now, in the Headmaster's study, a boy confessed that he had done it. That boy, Mulliner, was your brother."

"Oh, yes?"

"It was you who, in order to save me,



"Please, sir, it's about the statue."

inspired him to that confession. Do not deny it, Mulliner."

Augustine smiled an embarrassed smile.

"It was nothing, Bish, nothing at all."

"I trust the matter did not involve you in any too great expense. From what I know of brothers, the lad was scarcely likely to have carried through this benevolent ruse for nothing."

"Oh, just a couple of quid. He wanted three, but I beat him down. Preposterous, I mean to say," said Augustine, warmly. "Three quid for a perfectly simple, easy job like that! And so I told him."

"It shall be returned to you, Mulliner."

"No, no, Bish."

"Yes, Mulliner, it shall be returned to you. I have not the sum on my person, but I will forward you a cheque to your new address, The Vicarage, Steeple Mummery, Hants."

Augustine's eyes filled with sudden tears. He grasped the other's hand.

"Bish," he said in a choking voice, "I don't know how to thank you. But—have you considered?"

"Considered?"

"The wife of thy bosom. Deuteronomy xiii. 6. What will she say when you tell her?"

The Bishop's eyes gleamed with a resolute light.

"Mulliner," he said, "the point you raise had not escaped me. But I have the situation well in hand. A bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter—Ecclesiastes x. 20. I shall inform her of my decision on the long-distance telephone."

(Next month: "Portrait of a Disciplinarian.")

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 170.

(The Second of the Series.)

THE London thoroughfare we see
(What's bought in it just right will be)
Has been so altered that I vow
John Nash would hardly know it now.

1. Render yourselves! I trust my greeting
   Will indicate the place of meeting.
2. Gives rides to children at the Zoo;
   His trunk he always carries, too.
3. The bird did up and down meander;
   Could one address him just "Uganda"?
4. The sweet wild rose, but I admit
   An ant is in the heart of it.
5. The value of a Spade one chooses,
   'Tis worth the sum of all the Muses.
6. It sounds a charge, in bands 'tis known,
   Of course one must not blow one's own.

BOODLEBAR.

Answers to Acrostic No. 170 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on September 10th.

To every light one alternative answer may be sent; it should be written at the side. At the foot of his answer every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 169.

WHERE shall we go for holidays?
Where can we bask in the sun and laze?
Well, if the seaside calls to you,
In Kent there is *one*, in Sussex *two*.

1. Gleaning for corn a widow went.
2. Six letters spell a continent.
3. A maiden, good as any mile.
4. A snaky creature, full of guile.
5. A guide will half a guinea show.
6. An English stream, the bard we know.
7. A rhyme for brig, it grows on tree.
8. A rhyme for prize, with them you see.

REMUS.

1. R	u t	H
2. A	f r i c	A
3. M	i s	S
4. S	e r p e n	T
5. G	u	I
6. A	v o	N
7. T	w i	G
8. E	y e	S

NOTES.—Light 3. A miss is as good as a mile. 5. Guide, gui-nea. 6. Shakespeare, the bard of Avon.

Solvers who write to the Acrostic Editor and desire answers to their queries should, with their letters, enclose stamped addressed envelopes, and he will endeavour to reply.

THE GARGOYLE

By

FRANK SWINNERTON

Illustrated by
E. G. OAKDALE

I.

MILLICENT thought she had never seen such an ugly young man. He was not only ugly in a passive way, as many men are; but he had a grotesque, gargoyle-like face, and it was further distorted by an expression of great cheerfulness and good-nature. A large nose that was slightly awry, a large mouth, a queer-shaped skull, beaming eyes, and nearly six feet of solid-looking flesh—such was Mr. Domayne. He advanced into the drawing-room, grinning (she felt) at her surprise, at that slight ruffling of temper which she could not wholly suppress in contemplating so odd a stranger; and Millicent resented everything about him. She resented his coming, and his happy ugliness, and the air he had of being more at ease than she was herself; and worst of all she resented the fact that there was nothing really to resent about him at all. On the contrary.

"I'm sorry that my father is away," she remarked, trying to hide her annoyance. "He was called away unexpectedly by a telegram."

"Is that so?" answered the stranger, becoming serious. "I hope it's no bad news."

"We don't know yet. I don't expect so. Telegrams are always vague, aren't they? But we didn't know your address, and so we couldn't save you a useless journey."

"Ooh!" said the Gargoyle, reassuringly. He beamed afresh. Nothing, it seemed, could prevent him from beaming. "That's quite all right. Don't worry about me. I'll amuse myself easily. But I do want to see your father. He's promised to help me, you know."

"I know. You're writing a book, aren't you?" Millicent had a terrible fear that she was speaking to this man as if he were a slum-child placed in her charge for twenty-four hours; but she *could not* alter her tone. She wished that Everard had been there to help her—Everard was her *fiancé*—but unfortunately Everard was never there when he was wanted. That was Everard's chief quality as a *fiancé*, indeed.

"I'm writing a book," agreed the Gargoyle, seriously, and yet as if he were amused by Millicent. As if *she* were the child, and as if she were in *his* care. Ridiculous! Humiliating! She had never been more conscious of her two-and-twenty years; of the half-hoop of diamonds and sapphires which decorated the third finger on her left hand; of her five feet two inches of maturity.

"What will you do, then?" she asked. "Father, I think, suggested that you should stay with us; but——"

"Don't you trouble about that," answered the young man, grinning hideously and almost paternally, as if he were patting her hand and setting everything right. "I came down on my motor-bike; and when I passed through the village I noticed a pretty little inn. The Crown, isn't it? I'll just get a room there, and come back, if I may, when Mr. Pearson returns."

"That would be——" began Millicent, with dignity. "Of course, I don't know how long. He might be away for *days*——"

"It wouldn't matter. The book I'm writing is about Roman remains in Britain, you know. Perhaps you *didn't* know? Well, your father is a great expert on the subject; and he's promised to read over some of my notes and discuss some theories of mine. It's a great privilege——"

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"I know that Daddy——"

"He's the *greatest* authority. But meanwhile I can get about this part of the world. I mean, there are several places——"

"Of course, if I can *do* anything," Millicent said. "You've come such a long way."

"No. If you don't mind my calling to ask——"

He was upon his feet. There was every indication that he considered their interview to be at an end. And then something fatal happened. It was not seen at the moment to be fatal, but that may be said of every small event in the world's history from which crises have developed. Annie—officious Annie, the Pearsons' maid of all work—dropped something tinkling in the passage outside the door, and a moment later came blundering into the room bearing the best tea-tray, upon which, like lightning, she must have set the best tea-things as soon as the stranger had been admitted.

II.

"OH!" said Millicent, quickly. And then, confronted by Fate, she added: "You'll have a cup of tea, Mr. Domayne? After your long ride——"

The Gargoyle was again distorted by that recurrent smile. It became almost handsome with delight.

"There's nothing I should like better," exclaimed Mr. Domayne, with enthusiasm. "Thank you."

Again Millicent had a sense that he was amused by her dignity. Nobody had ever before been so amused by her dignity. Or by herself. But this ugly young man did not seem able to take her seriously. He was quite unlike Everard, who was never amused at anything she did. Everard *adored* her. It was nice to be adored. It was nicer to be adored than it was to be laughed at. With increased dignity, Millicent busied herself with the tea-tray.

"Sugar and milk?" she inquired. "Neither?"

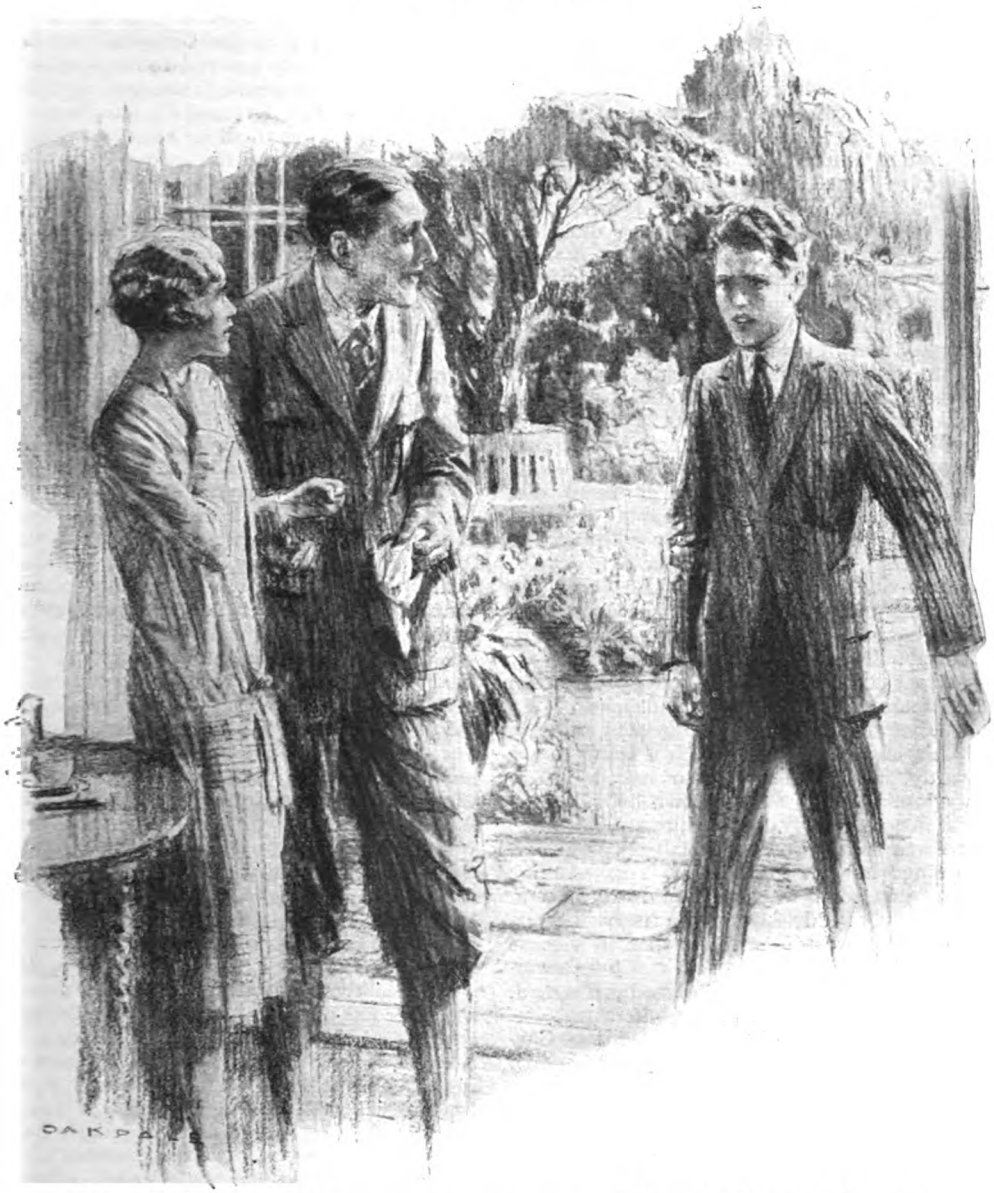
It was four o'clock upon Midsummer Day; and this old house lay in the heart of Sussex, amid scenery that was almost distractingly beautiful. For a wonder, Midsummer Day was radiantly fine. The sun shone hotly, and a fresh breeze stirred the leaves. Stirred, too, the tendrils of Millicent's fair hair, and fluttered about her soft cheeks. Blackbirds were warbling thoughtfully in the garden beyond the wide-open French windows; sparrows were chirping; a thrush was varying his note with all the well-known impatience of thrushes. The setting was ideal. The silences of this part of the world, which was seven miles from a main road and a station, and sixty-five miles from London, were miraculous in a noisy modern world. And tea at Rest Harrow was the kind of tea that one reads about in old-fashioned books for the Pearsons were old-fashioned people. Millicent had not been to London more than a dozen times in her life. The fact was to be read in her pretty face with its delicious complexion, and in her ordinarily simple manners; but it handicapped her, she felt, in pouring out tea for a young man with a face like a gargoyle, about whom she knew nothing, and who seemed to regard her smilingly as a child of fourteen.

She passed him his tea, and then looked quellingly at Mr. Domayne. She might have spared her pains. Nothing could quell such a young man. Even Everard's mother, the vicar's wife, who was frightfully freezing, could not have quelled him. He would have beamed at her, too. How dearly Millicent wished that Daddy had been at home to talk to this young man! Daddy, or even Everard, who was so clever, and so adoring, and who could talk (she was confident) to anybody about anything in the whole world, even Roman antiquities because he was so learned and was so glad to put everybody right about what they did not understand.

Unconsciously, as she longed for the support of Everard in this present ordeal, Millicent sighed, and as she had just placed a piece of Annie's rich home-made currant cake in her mouth a crumb flew instantly into her windpipe. Embarrassment upon embarrassment! Choking, she knocked against the folding table which bore the tray and spilt her tea into the saucer and into the tray. Tears—not of grief or anger or shame but of mere ignominious choking—started to her eyes. She was blinded, suffocated.

She knew that the Gargoyle had jumped to his feet, that he had moved the folding table a little to one side, that with his pocket-handkerchief in his hand he stood ready to give any necessary assistance, from that involved in carrying her into the fresh air to that which went no farther than dabbing the stain upon her dress with a motor-cyclist's pocket-handkerchief. The knowledge, and the dread of any application of that terrible handkerchief, made Millicent choke more than ever, and her face burned cruelly. Overwhelmed by mischance, she began quite definitely to dislike Mr. Domayne. She thought him officious as well as ugly. She also thought of him as the cause of all her misfortunes. She was right in this; but worse was to follow.

For just as Millicent stood upright, quite scarlet in the face, resisting Mr. Domayne's hand, which pressed upon her the grimy handkerchief from which she shrank; just as the gargoyle face was near her own, beaming reassuringly, and with something



Through the open windows came a young man. "Everard!" cried Millicent, gaspingly. "How you startled me!"

in the eyes which looked like laughter; just as they must have looked the most extraordinary couple in the world, the oldest of friends, the newest of sweethearts, laughing and embarrassed, Millicent's prayer of a moment earlier was answered. It was answered too late, or too soon, to be of any use to her. It was answered at an excessively inopportune moment. Through the open French windows, suddenly, in silence, and with great precipitation, as if he had been running, came a young man.

"Everard!" cried Millicent, gaspingly. And, as if that were not enough, she must needs add: "How you startled me!" Well, of course, that was the worst thing she could possibly have said. The words proceeded from a mind as flushed as her cheeks, which were as red as they could be.

III.

EVERARD was younger than the Gargoyle. He was a year older than Millicent, whereas the Gargoyle looked as if he might be about twenty-eight. Everard was the vicar's son. He was extremely learned for his age, but he did not look learned, and, in fact, he did not look his age. He had very round, pink cheeks, and a little chin with a dimpling cleft in the centre of it. He had a large mass of curly flaxen hair, and wonderfully red, pouting lips. The ten young women who composed the eligible population of Pigglesdown and its neighbourhood were all discreetly half in love with Everard, and Millicent a year earlier had been given the prize, so that she was really a very lucky girl indeed. She knew this. She had known it — almost monotonously — for twelve months. She knew it more distinctly than ever as she gazed at Everard after her idiotic remark, and saw him gazing at the Gargoyle with a most peculiar expression upon his face. She had only to look from Everard to the Gargoyle and back again to realize her good-fortune very acutely. Everard was well-favoured. By contrast with the strange ugly young man he became positively beautiful.

"Everard!" cried Millicent, eagerly. "This is Mr. Domayne. He's come to see Daddy, and Daddy's been called up to London. Come and sit down. Or, first—call Annie. Oh, there you are, Annie." She was speaking feverishly, the colour still flaming in her cheeks. "Yes, Annie; I was just going to ask if you'd bring them. Thank you. Mr. Domayne is writing a book, Everard. It's about that he's come to see Daddy."

"How d'you do?" said Everard, stiffly, frowning with intense distaste.

"How d'you do?" responded the Gargoyle, beaming.

And, having exchanged these courtesies, the two young men appeared not to notice one another, after the best model for the deportment of young English gentlemen who meet for the first time. An age passed. Millicent gazed in despair at Everard. He looked black. He looked terrible. She ignored his expression, and dwelt upon his features. She saw with joy and pride how the sunlight caught his mop of curly flaxen hair, and could not resist peeping at the Gargoyle in order to observe the degree to which he was impressed. To her indignation, his ugly face wore its apparently customary expression of hideous benevolence, but in the depths of those frank and comprehending eyes there lurked once more the indescribable shadow of deep laughter. It was too much. Having seen Everard limply return his cup to the tray, and having satisfied herself that the Gargoyle also had finished his tea, she jumped to her feet.

"Now, Mr. Domayne," she said, briskly. "Would you like Everard to telephone to the Crown, asking them to keep a room for you, while I show you the garden?"

"That would be delightful," said the Gargoyle. "Would he mind?"

"I'll ask him," dryly responded Millicent. "Will you, dear?"

"For to-night?" asked Everard—she feared rather sulkily. Nay, she *knew* it. *Very* sulkily.

"For an indefinite period," said the Gargoyle, beaming with amiability. "Thank you so much."

IV.

IF Millicent had not by now thoroughly disliked Mr. Domayne, so that she was delighted when his horrible motor-bicycle snorted away to the village, she would have found Everard's new silence of jealousy rather gratifying. It pleased her vanity that Everard should be jealous; but it irritated her to know that the jealousy must be giving immense amusement to the Gargoyle. Also, Everard behaved in a rather ignominious way which made her ashamed of him. He ignored the stranger; but he ignored over-studiously, until it seemed as though the Gargoyle glittered by comparison with a perfectly dull schoolboy. And so, in spite of the Gargoyle's tact, their walk round the garden was less than a triumph of sociability. It gradually became a funereal promenade. And at last, much to Millicent's relief, Mr. Domayne took his leave, promising to call again the following afternoon.

And as the loud clattering of his motor-bicycle died away in the distance Everard committed an indiscretion. Instead of clasping his beloved in his arms, and murmuring "At last!" (to which Millicent would have responded with a heartfelt "Thank goodness!"), he looked distantly away from her, with a scowl as black as thunder upon his plump, child-like face, and uttered terrible words. He said:—

"I want to know how it is I found you kissing that bounder, Millicent."

Millicent could not believe her ears.

"Everard!" she demanded.

"I want to know why you let that beast kiss you," said Everard, doggedly.

Millicent's heart seemed to lurch sharply. She felt sick. The blood swept up to her face exactly as it had done when she choked over the crumb which leapt into her windpipe.

"How *dare* you!" she cried, in a rage. "I'd never seen the man until an hour ago."

"That only makes it worse," retorted Everard, with trembling lips.

Millicent could not speak. She was choking again—this time with indignation.

"I'll never speak to you again!" she declared. "At least, not till you've apologized!"

And with that she turned swiftly upon her heel, and ran back to the house.

V.

SHE was still furious when she arrived indoors, and for five minutes afterwards. She walked about the sitting-room with her heart beating and her teeth clenched. And at last her breath caught in a rather hysterical laugh of excitement.

"How ridiculous!" she exclaimed. Again she quivered with anger. "How shameful!"

Her finger flew for one instant—so indignant was Millicent—to the half-hoop, as if she would cast it from her. But the action was not completed. Her hands dropped to her sides.

"To think that I'd—— *That* man! Good gracious; what can Everard *see* in him? It's disgraceful of Everard. It's disgraceful!" At last she thought: "He'll be coming in to apologize in a minute, and say he's sorry. Then I'll explain. We'll laugh at it."

Slowly her head shook.

"I wonder if we shall?" she thought. "It's quite true, Everard's not easily amused. He's serious. It's because—— Oh, how disloyal I am! He's perfect. He's *perfect*." And all the time a little voice was saying within her, "He isn't. He's been silly and insulting." But her conscious thought continued: "He's just different from Mr. Domayne, who's amused at *everything*—even if it's nothing at all. Here he comes."

It was Annie, come to collect the tea-things. Millicent turned away to hide her bright eyes. Annie was another woman, who "noticed" such things.

VI.

MEANWHILE, Everard, his heart swelling at thought of the fickleness of woman—of *modern* woman—had reached the vicarage. He had entered the drawing-room of the vicarage, where sat his mother, eagle-eyed, rather eagle-nosed, a large, rather short, magisterial woman who wore a large square-patterned dress of grey flannel and held her head very high.

"Everard!" cried Everard's mother.

Sulkily, Everard sat down at a distance.

"What is it, my dear?" demanded his mother. "You're upset. Tell mother what it is."

Haltingly the tale was told. And to an accompaniment of exclamations of incredulity and amazement. Mrs. Manners became more eagle-like than ever. She looked first at Everard, and then, scathingly, as if at an imaginary Millicent.

"Scandalous!" cried Mrs. Manners. "Her father not two hours gone from home. Scandalous! I always suspected it. The girl's no good. I must think what's to be done."

VII.

IN his room at the Crown, the Gargoyle was staring at the tiny rose-pattern of his wall-paper, and at the pictures of racehorses and dogs which hung irregularly about the room; and he was thinking, "What a very nice, pretty, attractive girl! And what a young prig of a sweetheart she's got!" And at the same time he thought with pleasure of the fact that he would be seeing Millicent again within twenty-four hours. Because although Maurice Domayne was quite the most learned man of his age regarding the Roman occupation of Britain, he had not gone so far into personal antiquity as to be blind or insensitive to young women as charming as Millicent Pearson.

He was still thinking of Millicent as he took a stroll through the lanes about Pigglesdown after his supper that evening. The hedges were high, the roads were white under a large moon, except where they were deeply shadowed by overarching trees, and little bats were whisking about in the gloom, blundering about his head in their flight. Sounds carried very far, and a thousand faint rustlings caught Maurice Domayne's ear as he walked. Presently, when he had gone perhaps a couple of miles from the village, he stopped to gaze through a gap in the dark hedge and across several moon-bleached meadows, to the lovely shape of a low hill which stood at a little distance. Tempted by such beauty, he even slipped through the gap, and sat down upon the grass, in the shadow, with his knees up and his arms clasping them. His position—although Maurice did not realize this until later—was such as to conceal him from the rest of the world. It was completely shrouded by the darkness and by heavy undergrowth. Puffing gently at his big round-bowled pipe, Maurice sat in silence, exulting at the radiance of the scene, and thinking idly and pleasantly of Millicent.

For several minutes he had sat thus, without hearing anything but the distant noises of the village, and the hushing of the soft leaves, and the hardly perceptible movements of birds and creeping things in the hedges about him, when without warning there came through the evening air a whisper.

Maurice started. The first whisper was answered by another.

"You're late, I say."

"I couldn't get out before. Mum kept on at me."

There was a kiss, and some smothered laughter from a girl. A rustling as if two persons had brushed heavily against the hedge behind Maurice.

"Don't be so rough," said one of the whisperers. "Ooh!"

Maurice became very uncomfortable. The *rôle* of eavesdropper was a new one for him, and he did not like it. Should he plunge suddenly out from his place of concealment? Or should he stay where he was? The voices seemed to be nearer. He remained still.

The lanes were not so shadowed as to prevent him from seeing two figures withdrawn into the darkness under the trees.

"I'm not rough." It was the thick voice of amorous youth.

"Yes, you are." It was caressing, enticing. "Nice rough."

There was another rustling. For a moment Maurice thought the lovers were upon him. Then came silence. Had they gone? No. There was a whisper which he did not catch. It was indignantly answered—this time almost aloud, and by a man.

"I *don't*, Nellie. I swear I don't. Yes, I know; but she doesn't, either. I caught her kissing another fellow this afternoon. I'm sick of it. But you know my mater. No, it's *you*. I swear it is."

"What you going to do, then?" came a quick murmur in reply. Was it a little harder?

"I'm going to—oh, I don't know. A fellow can't—— I mean—— You'll have to wait a bit. Yes, *wait*."

"But, Everard——"

"Ssh!"

They had passed, leaving Maurice staggered. "Everard"—wasn't that the name of the young man with the red face and the mop of yellow hair? Goldilocks? The donor of that appalling half-hoop upon—— And "Nellie"—what was Miss Pearson's name? Hadn't the fellow called her "Millicent"? Yes, of course he had. "Millicent Pearson." Not "Nellie," or whatever was the original of "Nellie." Besides, there was a burr in this girl's speech. This was a country girl. Millicent spoke otherwise. It was not she.

"Oho, Master Everard!" muttered the Gargoyle to himself. "So that's you, is it? Not a prig, but a cad, is it? A Don Juan! Oho! Now this is decidedly interesting!"

And with that he puffed again at his pipe, relighted it, came forth from his resting-place, and resumed his walk. The lanes were shadowed hereabouts; but they were not so shadowed as to prevent him, a few minutes later, from seeing two figures withdrawn into the darkness under the trees, hardly breathing, alarmed by his footsteps and hiding from his eyes. He had no difficulty—now that he had been warned—in recognizing the figure of the young man; and as he did this Maurice drew his breath sharply.

"Kissing another fellow, eh?" he thought. "You liar! And what are *you* doing?"

VIII.

"DOMAYNE? Look here, I'm so sorry about yesterday." The voice was raw and unrecognizable over the telephone. "I was called away. I got back an hour ago. Can you come up? Bring your traps. What's that? No, no, no; of course you're coming to stay here. That's all nonsense. My invitation holds good. The room's ready for you. Come along at once, will you? We'll have a good talk before dinner."

Maurice Domayne's beaming face had a little dry turn as he heard Millicent's father ring off. He backed from the telephone, which was in the passage-way of the Crown, between the parlour and the bar, and saw Mrs. Howard, the landlady, standing at a little distance, watching him and smiling. Mrs. Howard was a very trim, plump, smooth-faced woman to whom everything was—it seemed—as much of a joke as it was to Maurice. And she had taken a liking to the Gargoyle, reading, perhaps, his heart, and not (as Millicent had done) his face.

"So I've got to go, after all," Maurice said to her, a little ruefully.

"Perhaps you'll come back again, sir."

"Perhaps I shall. I *hope* I shall. Oh, by the way——" A thought struck Maurice. "Do you know a girl in the village—I should say about twenty—called Nellie?"

Mrs. Howard considered, her eyes bright with curiosity.

"Fair or dark?" she asked.

How was Maurice to know that? He had not seen the girl. Her voice? Some instinct guided him.

"Dark," he said, promptly.

"Ah, that's Nellie Rich, over at the farm about a mile out of the village, sir. Parrott's Farm, they call it. She's a good girl; the eldest of seven bonny children. Mrs. Rich was a Furll, daughter of the baker here. Her mother was—— Why was it you asked, sir?"

For answer, the Gargoyle beamed.

"I just wondered," he said, pleasantly. "Only curiosity. She's very pretty."

IX.

MR. PEARSON received him warmly —an oldish, but not an old, loosely-built man with a long chin, a wide, thin, humorous mouth, and some thin grey hair. He was all grey, it seemed, for the light suit he wore was grey, and his shirt and tie were grey. Even his face was rather grey. In a particularly gentle fashion he was very genial. He was extremely tall, and he stooped, so that his arms hung loose. And he, too, as Mrs. Howard had done, took an instant liking to Maurice, and in shaking hands with him raised his other hand to the Gargoyle's shoulder.

"Well, my boy, you were unlucky yesterday. Or, rather, *I* was unlucky. My poor sister-in-law—Aunt Doris, as we call her—fell downstairs; and as I could be of no possible use they telegraphed for me. They thought she'd die. But of course when I arrived she was quite well again, and the whole thing looked a fraud. You had tea here, I heard. You saw Millicent. She's my prop. But she's in some trouble, it appears, and has gone for a bicycle ride to let off steam. She'll be back for tea. Sit down, my boy, sit down. These young people have their troubles that we never dream of. Though I suppose—— Now that I look at you, I suppose you'd regard yourself as young enough to have troubles. Eh? Eh?"

"Almost," agreed the Gargoyle. "Or, at least, to sympathize with the troubles of others."

The old man shot a sharp glance from under tufted grey brows.

"I'm young enough for that myself," he observed, dryly." Did you see a young man here yesterday? Yes, of course you did. Yes, of course you did." There was a great twinkle in Mr. Pearson's eyes. "What did you think of him?"

Maurice was taken aback. Swiftly he recalled the conversation he had overheard upon the previous evening. The beam upon his ugly face wavered for an instant.

"That's dangerous ground," he ventured. "Is it a fair question?"

The old man looked about him, over his shoulder, and at the open French window of the sitting-room. Following the glance, Maurice could see a corner of the green lawn, and a profusion of beech leaves, rich and tender.

"To tell you the truth," said Mr. Pearson, in an undertone—"mind, I'm indiscreet—I'd rather it was anybody else. Eh?"

The Gargoyle's eyes gleamed. He was amazed at such indiscretion. But he had the sense to know that it was not vulgar indiscretion. It came direct from an appreciation of his own trustworthiness.

"But your daughter, sir?" he asked, in the same low tone.

"Pooh! A pretty boy. No mother. It happened a year ago. She's older now. She's waking up to him, I think. They do, you know. They see through us—eh? Well, then, it's a question of fancy whether they stick to us or not."

"You think she'll throw him over?" The Gargoyle was aware of strange excitement.

"As soon as she sees a real man," answered Millicent's father, with his wide grin. "Don't you?"

X.

IT was at this juncture that Everard's mother arrived. She walked straight in by the French window, as though she had a right there. Maurice saw an elderly dame in a flannel frock which hung about her as a sack might have done. He saw ugly arms, an eagly nose, and piercing eyes under a broad-brimmed youthful straw hat. Mrs. Manners was warm, as a result of her errand and her physical exertion. She came into the room abruptly, stared at both Mr. Pearson and the Gargoyle, and looked beyond them for Millicent.

"Oh, I wanted to see Millicent," she said, rather rudely.

"Out," answered Mr. Pearson, straightening himself and gazing ironically down at her. Maurice saw that Mrs. Manners would look more impressive seated. Here, upon her feet, she was dwarfed by the tall old man, and her massiveness took a great deal from her own height. "May I introduce my friend Mr. Domayne? Mrs. Manners, our parson's wife. The mother of the young man you met yesterday, Maurice."

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Manners again, staring at Maurice for the second time. "So you're the young man my son saw yesterday."

Maurice bowed. Mr. Pearson drew forward, and patted, a comfortable chair.

"Sit down," he said. "You're warm. You've come to tea, I dare say."

"I have *not*," said Mrs. Manners. "I've come to have a few words with Millicent."

"A few words! Tut-tut!" rallied Millicent's father. "Say them to me, Mrs. Manners. Say them to me. As a matter of fact, I'm glad to see you. I'd rather have seen your boy."

"My poor Everard!" exclaimed Mrs. Manners.

"Poor?" Maurice could not restrain the inquiry.

The effect upon Mrs. Manners of this simple ejaculation was electrical.

"Yes, sir, *poor*," she repeated. "As well

you know." Her head seemed to twitch as she glared at him.

"Is he in trouble, then?" questioned Maurice.

"I decline to discuss him with you," said Mrs. Manners, haughtily. She turned away, and swept Mr. Pearson with her eyes. "I don't know if you have *heard*, Mr. Pearson, of the shock my poor boy has had?"

Before replying, Millicent's father interrogated Maurice with a mute glance. Maurice's face had taken on an amused expression, but he was not at all perturbed. Mr. Pearson's eyes gleamed.

"Dear, dear," he murmured, sympathetically.

"A shock," pursued Mrs. Manners, "which has been as great to myself."

"And the cause?" questioned Mr. Pearson.

"This young man knows perfectly well what the cause is." Again her head twitched with excitement. Her face reddened.

"Oh, I wanted to see Millicent," she said, rather rudely.

"Greater to you, I'm sure," suggested Maurice. "After all, your son has only himself to blame."

Mrs. Manners appeared astounded.

"Blame?" she stammered. "You're very impudent, Mr.——"

"What is it? What is it?" demanded Mr. Pearson, testily.

"Mrs. Manners is naturally distressed," said the Gargoyle, pleasantly. "She has a very difficult task to perform. She has come to apologize to Miss Pearson."

"Apologize!" cried Mrs. Manners. "Certainly not!"

"Her son, she finds, has been carrying on an intrigue with another young woman while he is engaged to your daughter."

"Ridiculous!" interrupted Mrs. Manners. "Ridiculous! It's the contrary of the truth. Mr. Pearson——"

"And so Mrs. Manners has come up to make what apology she can——"

"Be silent, sir! Mr. Pearson. Poor Everard came here yesterday to see his *fiancée*—his *fiancée*—and upon entering the room discovered her in *this*—this young man's arms, kissing and being kissed by him. I have called for an explanation. Such a thing has——"

The Gargoyle interrupted her.

"Do you *want* the explanation?" he demanded.

"Come along, Domayne."

"Miss Pearson was choking——"

Mrs. Manners could not restrain her laughter.

"As you or any other lady might choke," persisted the Gargoyle.

"*Really*, Mr.——" cried Mrs. Manners, scornfully. "I should have thought you could have thought of a better explanation than that!" She pretended to laugh again.

"I wonder," said the Gargoyle, with great deliberation, "whether your son could give quite as good an explanation of the way he is deceiving a poor young village girl here."

Mrs. Manners became furiously angry. She grew crimson. She trembled violently.

"*What* young village girl?" she almost shouted. "I don't believe it!"

"I'll give *him* a chance to tell you her name," said the Gargoyle.

"Pooh!" cried Mrs. Manners, violently. "You can't do it!"

"I could. I won't. Ask your son."

"I never heard——"

Mrs. Manners rose impetuously to her feet. She was seething with rage. She could not complete her sentence. Instead, she caught her breath, took another, tried once more to speak, took a third breath, and at last, as if suffocating with all the emotions which this young man's coolness could arouse in a life-long tyrant, she most vehemently *choked*.

To one choke was added another. And another. Gasping frantically, and almost weeping with fright, Mrs. Manners put out a hand and clasped the first arm that was proffered. Her chokes grew deeper and deeper, like whooping-cough. They racked her. She stood choking and choking, at the same time holding tightly to Maurice's stout arm, gripping him with unconscious ferocity. The blood rushed to her cheeks, which grew darker and darker. Tears filled her eyes, which started from her head. It seemed as though she would never stop choking. As though she would die of choking. The horrors of suffocation were upon her. Never in the experience of any of these three had there been so overwhelming a fit of choking. It was voluptuous, regal, terrifying. Anxiously, both men gathered to her side, patting her shoulders and supporting her, looking at her and looking away, full of concern and helplessness.

And at that moment Everard himself appeared in the open French windows, as he had done upon the previous day. He stood transfixed with astonishment at the sight of Mrs. Manners in the embrace of two agitated members of the opposite sex.

"*Mother!*" he exclaimed, reproachfully. '*Mother!*"

XI.

A FEW weeks later, in the same room as that in which these events had taken place, Millicent was pouring out afternoon tea. She was wearing a pale blue dress which revealed deliciously the clear pink and white of her complexion. She held the teapot aloft in her right hand, while her left hand, ringless, rested upon the edge of the tray. Near her, in the chair which he had occupied upon the occasion of his first visit, sat the Gargoyle. But he did not seem to Millicent any longer to resemble a gargoyle. She felt that his very fine dark, humorous eyes dominated every other feature. They were full of laughter and full of nonsense. And laughter and nonsense, she now saw, were the most charming—and indeed the most valuable—qualities in the world. It was impossible to overestimate their charm or their value.

"Daddy isn't coming down to tea to-day," said Millicent. "He's not very well. He's resting."

"He's getting idle," said Maurice.

"Is it as nice tea as you get at the Crown?"

"Almost as nice," he teased. "Of course, Mrs. Howard——"

"Yes, I know she's perfect." A pretended frown crossed Millicent's face.

"This afternoon," proceeded Maurice, "as I was strolling up here, I ran into young Everard. That was what made me late. You know, although he's a puppy, he's not an absolute fool."

"No, I suppose not. Where was he going?"

"He didn't say. Out to Parrott's Farm, I suppose. He tells me that Mrs. Manners has given in over that."

"They're engaged? Oh, how good!" There was no bitterness and no pretence in Millicent's exclamation. But in a moment it might have been observed that she gave the smallest of sighs. Maurice was unaware of the sigh. He was busy with his own thoughts.

"It's an extraordinary thing," he said, at last. "Wherever I go, I seem to have an effect of some sort."

"You're very conceited," criticized Millicent, looking at him disapprovingly. "Very. And don't we all have some effect?"

"Perhaps." He nodded his head. "When I came here first, Mrs. Howard——"

"Oh, bother Mrs. Howard!" cried Millicent, laughing.

"And you——"

"*What* about me?"

"Well, you were engaged."

"Was I?" The hand resting upon the edge of the tray moved slightly.

"To Everard. Don't you remember?"

"I've forgotten," said Millicent.

"And now *he's* engaged to Nellie Rich. That leaves only you—and me—Millicent."

She made no reply; and the Gargoyle, as if discouraged, fell suddenly silent. With the quickest of glances, Millicent saw that he had become very grave. His expression was serious, his eyes were lowered. That grin, which she was beginning to find so subtly reassuring, was absent from his face.

A terrible constraint seized them both. It lasted—oh, endlessly. Until Millicent seemed to feel a little cold spot, which was her heart, sinking gradually lower and lower, and becoming heavier, heavier. Tears gathered behind her eyes; her smile was forced. She raised her teacup very calmly to her lips, to show that she was entirely mistress of herself; and she set the cup down again untasted, with her lips and her fingers trembling.

But just as she was beginning to feel like a little girl who is in disgrace, Millicent received an inspiration. It darted through her mind as quicksilver might have done. It was an inspiration that came straight from Mother Nature, who must have been hovering there in protection of her children. Millicent, in fact, reached out her hand and took a piece of cake. Nothing in that, you will say. It is done every afternoon. But listen! It was not the same cake as that one which had produced the earlier catastrophe, but was the twin sister of that cake. It contained currants, and it crumbled. And Millicent, putting into her mouth a first piece of this providential cake, and very archly glancing during the process at the Gargoyle (but unseen by him), allowed herself shamelessly and deliberately to choke. It was not a very serious choke—not a choke such as Mrs. Manners had suffered, or even a choke such as Millicent herself—— It was merely a little cough or two, or at most three or four. And having choked once, she must needs choke again. In choking, she laughed.

IT was nothing. Neither in point of time nor dangerousness was it anything at all. And yet the choke and her laughter brought warm blood into the Gargoyle's cheeks. It brought a light to his eyes. Slowly, slowly, from between her eyelashes, Millicent saw the grin return to the Gargoyle's face, and expand, and at last envelop him entirely. It was at this point that Millicent closed her eyes fast. Her little handkerchief was held close to her lips. She seemed almost to lose consciousness, even to fall into a dream. And in dreams, as all know, the strangest things happen—the strangest, most incredible, and at the same time (often enough) the most agreeable things. When next Millicent opened her eyes it was to find that she was no longer mistress of herself. By some miracle, Maurice's arm was drawn closely about her. She was pressed to his side. His ugly, gargoyle-like face, decorated and suffused with a grin of delight such as would have melted a heart of stone, was irresistibly near to hers. His eyes were so deep and so near that she could see herself drowning in them.

"Thank you," Millicent murmured, gratefully. "I—— Oh, Maurice!"

Mr. Pearson, who had changed his mind about coming down to tea, looked in at that moment through the French windows; but as he was a wise old man he withdrew quite hastily and in silence. It was a sacrifice to him to go without his tea; but he would have sacrificed more than his tea for the sake of his daughter's happiness. Indeed, as he sauntered about the garden, Mr. Pearson was smiling to himself as though a secret wish of his own had just been fulfilled.

THESE THRILLING ARTICLES ARE FACT—NOT FICTION.

Cases from My Crime-Book

By

H. ASHTON-WOLFE

(*Interpreter at the Criminal Courts*)

Illustrated by
F. E. HILEY

AUTHOR'S NOTE

My profession as interpreter has brought me constantly in touch with the great criminal investigation centres of the world, and I have many times become intimate with some of the more interesting criminals of modern times.

The stories which I have selected for this series can be found in the official records, only one or two details having been rearranged in order to avoid giving pain and reopening old wounds.

I have myself taken part either in the investigation or the final trials of the criminals. Several of the cases I have specially selected because of the ingenuity displayed both by the law-breakers and by the investigators.

No. VI. HERR GRÜNENTHAL OF THE REICHSBANK AND HIS TRAGIC LOVE

I HAVE never thought of Paul Grünenthal as a criminal, although the offence he committed is punished in his country with twenty years' penal servitude. He was a man exposed to a temptation so great that I often wonder how many in this world would have resisted it from sheer stern moral principles; and the temptation was the greater because he knew full well that there was barely one chance in a million of his offence ever being discovered. Yet that one chance, like a tiny black cloud on the horizon, growing, swelling, expanding, and bringing with it a terrible storm, inevitably culminated in his downfall; for he had not reckoned with the evil soul of the girl for whom he bartered life and honour. She was the flaw in his chain of reasoning.

Because of Emma Gotz—the woman in the case—his offence became a crime which cost three human lives.

Great riches within reach of his hand, almost certain immunity, and a passionate longing for youth and beauty created a vortex in which he was irresistibly whirled to destruction. How the little imp of the

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perverse, into whose power a man falls when he enters the forbidden territory of sinful passion, must have laughed with unholy glee as he stirred the ingredients for the coming tragedy! A man of honour and virtue past middle age; not rich, yet daily handling great wealth; a girl base but beautiful, whose vanity ruled her; her lover—a beast of the criminal underworld, and the mother—of the dregs—cruel and greedy; these the demon cast into life's cauldron and then left them to ferment, adding first the spices he knew so well how to choose with cunning brain.

Emma Gotz.

I MET Paul Grünenthal for the first time whilst I was in Berlin, instructing the German Sûreté in the methods of Paris. I had gone to visit the "Reichsdruckerei," the printing works belonging to the State Bank, where marvellously efficient presses stamped on multicoloured paper the complex designs which represented the money of the period: one hundred, five hundred, and one thousand marks, then the equivalent of our five, twenty-five, and fifty-pound Bank of England notes.

He was Director of this department, and his duty was to eliminate and destroy those notes which had the tiniest flaw, imperceptible often to any but his expert examination. The numbers of the bank-notes thus weeded out were entered by Paul Grünenthal in a ledger and the notes were then burned. I remember asking at the time what would happen if the numbers were not recorded and the bank-notes stolen by someone.

"Oh," he said, with a good-natured laugh, "I am responsible for their immediate destruction, before the perfect notes are sent away. No one else knows which are faulty, and I have done this for years. They do not represent money to me at all. But, of course, if I were to betray my trust—why, it might be years before it was noticed that duplicate numbers were in circulation."

"Then other bank-notes are printed once more with the same series number as those which are destroyed?" I asked.

Herr Grünenthal nodded and showed me several, challenging me to pick out those with a flaw. Only in the case of one, where the water-mark had a double outline, could I say for certain that it differed from the notes which had been passed.

A year later all Berlin was startled to learn that Paul Grünenthal had been arrested for fraudulently retaining and using as money rejected bank-notes, which he had carried away from the Reichsbank instead of burning them. He thus obtained over twenty thousand pounds. The trial was the most sensational ever known in Germany, and lasted nine days. Terribly tragic facts came to light. Herr Grünenthal had abandoned his wife and two children in order to be free to woo a young girl named Emma Gotz, who was noted for her extraordinary beauty amongst the many artists to whom she had often sat as a model. The money had all been spent on fine dresses, jewels, and every conceivable luxury for this girl. But let me tell the story from the beginning.

THE waiters of the well-known Restaurant and Weinhaus Kempinsky, in the Leipziger Strasse, were busily arranging flowers and glasses, plates and snowy napkins, at a long table set in the centre of the special dining-room reserved for guests of honour. Herr Grünenthal, lately retired from the Reichsbank, was giving a sumptuous dinner to some friends that evening, and he was noted for his fastidious tastes and open-handed generosity. Furthermore, he drank nothing but champagne, and that alone placed him above the other diners.

"He can afford it," said Karl, the head-waiter, confidentially to one of his men. "Only a month ago he came here one evening from the Karlshorst races with a great big bundle of thousand-mark notes. He had backed a hundred-to-one chance; you remember, the French horse Noir de Fumée came in first when everyone had expected the favourite to win. A lucky man truly. They say he is making a fortune on the Stock Exchange also. Everything he touches succeeds. But he spends it all on that girl, Emma Gotz. She is beautiful—yes, I grant you that—but a plebeian. Of the *canaille*, as the French say, and her mother used to sell papers at the kiosk in the Friedrich Strasse before Herr Grünenthal came along. She eats asparagus with a knife—truly—I have seen her. Herr Grünenthal should choose a lady. Quick—here they are!"

A noisy, lively company had filed in, and Karl clicked his heels together and bent low as Herr Grünenthal came up to him.

"I've just discovered that we are thirteen. That will never do, Karl. I am superstitious, as all gamblers are. I have won again to-day at the races. You shall have a royal *trinkgeld*, but find me someone to invite. Is there no one here whom I know?"

"Oh, yes, Herr Grünenthal, there is the Chief of the Geheimpolizei, Von Jagow, all alone over by the window—no doubt the Herr knows him." For a moment Paul Grünenthal turned pale and looked startled; then he said, angrily: "Donnerwetter, Karl, why should I know any of the police? What the dickens do you mean?"

"But," stammered the disconcerted waiter, "the Herr used to be a State official—I thought perhaps——"

"No, no—I don't know him and don't want to; get me some poor devil from the street who doesn't often eat his fill—he shall fare well to-night. By the way—does that Chief of Police often come here?"

"Oh, yes, Herr—very often." Visibly relieved, Grünenthal approached his guests, who were preparing to take their places.

"One minute, my friends—we are unfortunately thirteen, and, as you know, I'm very superstitious. I have told the Kellner to fetch someone. My sweet Emma shall sit at the head of the table. I will sit at her right and the stranger at her left. That will be very amusing." At that moment the head-waiter returned, followed by a young man, whose ill-fitting, patched clothes and worn shoes could not altogether destroy a certain lithe grace, but whose handsome if rather vulgar face was pinched and pale, and his mop of curly fair hair badly in need of a barber's attention. His grey eyes scanned the assembled fashionable guests with a keen, penetrating glance, finally coming to rest on the flushed and vivacious face of Emma Gotz. As she turned and encountered his eager gaze, the colour slowly faded from her cheeks and she grew deathly pale. No one noticed this, however, for Grünenthal greeted the new-comer boisterously and inquired what his name was.

"Heinrich Lange, sir," he replied, in a low voice.

"Then to-night you shall be Baron von Lange. Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to present the Baron—knight of the knife and fork, for one evening only." Everyone laughed at the joke and bowed with exaggerated courtesy, and the dinner began. The fourteenth guest took little part in the conversation, but now and then his burning glance strayed to his fair neighbour and rested with a queer expression on her face, until, obviously against her will, her eyes met and were held by his. During the meal, which was noisy and gay, many pedlars, such as are allowed to enter and ply their trade in German restaurants, came to the table—girls selling flowers—tipsters—dealers

"Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to present the Baron—knight of the knife and fork, for one evening only."

in jewellery, and finally, when coffee was served, a little Jew came in who was well known to all, for he sold tickets in the State lotteries. He was at once hailed with delight. Paul Grünenthal ordered him to let each of his guests choose a ticket, and when all had done so he also drew one from the bundle held out to him, and thrust it carelessly in his pocket.

"Be very careful of the ticket, Herr," said the Jew. "I know you vill vin. Gott—if I vere as lucky as the Herr Grünenthal! Always vat he touches it turns to gold; and if you *do* vin you vill not forget Solomon Levy who sold you de ticket—and who vill deserve a commission?"

"No," replied Grünenthal, laughing. "If I win you shall come and get a handsome commission, Levy."

At the conclusion of this banquet the host rose and toasted the queen of the evening, his beloved Emma, and drawing a leather case from his pocket he disclosed a beautiful diamond pendant, which excited cries of envy and admiration from everyone present. This he fastened around the neck of the blushing, delighted girl.

"Is she not beautiful?" he demanded, turning from one to the other amid applause and shouts of approbation. He did not notice the sudden flash of greed in the eyes of the young man, Heinrich Lange, nor, when the party broke up and he dismissed him with a couple of gold coins, did he notice the furtive hand-clasp between the girl in silk and satin and the vagabond whom he had feasted.

THE next day Herr Grünenthal called at the beautiful apartment which he had taken and furnished with every comfort and luxury that money could buy. He had presented it, with the lease and a three years' receipt for rent in advance, to the girl Emma Gotz, who lived there with her mother, Frau Gotz, formerly known as "Old Latsche, the paper-seller." As he entered the hall, letting himself in with the latch-key which he had stipulated should always be his—he was startled to hear a man's voice proceeding from the *salon*. With two strides he crossed to the door and threw it wide. In the room, and apparently deep in an argument with the mother, was the man who had made the fourteenth guest the night before, Heinrich Lange. Angrily Paul Grünenthal demanded to know what he was doing there.

"Ach, Herr Grünenthal," Frau Gotz replied, without appearing in the least embarrassed, "dear Emma dropped her bag last night when she stepped into the carriage, and this honest young man brought it a few minutes ago."

"How did he know where to bring it?" Grünenthal inquired, suspiciously.

"He found her address inside on some letters. I told Mr. Lange to wait, because he is in need of work, and I was sure you would help him to find a situation."

"Good—all right—I will see; let him come to my house in the Magdeburger Strasse to-morrow afternoon. Here is a thaler for his trouble now."

Murmuring his thanks, the unwelcome visitor withdrew. Paul Grünenthal was tigerishly jealous, for he well knew that his beloved Emma had many admirers among the Bohemians and artists, and the fear that, notwithstanding his generosity and the constant rain of presents and money which he showered upon her, she would obey the call of youth and leave him had become an obsession. The more so since she had as yet conceded nothing more in return for his devotion than a few half-hearted kisses.

"And how is my angel this morning?" he asked, after the man had gone. "Why is she not here to greet me?"

"She is dressing, making herself beautiful for you," the old creature purred with an oily smile. "She has spent the morning trying on the lovely dresses which arrived from the dressmaker. By the way, there is the bill—five thousand marks. If Herr Grünenthal will give me the money I will pay the messenger when he calls."

With an absent-minded expression the infatuated man handed her five bank-notes, which she almost crumpled in her eagerness to grasp them.

"And now," he said, "go and call my sweet darling."

A few minutes later the girl appeared. She stood a moment in the doorway for effect, as her mother had taught her to do, whilst Grünenthal feasted his eyes on her supple, comely form. Emma Gotz was beautiful and knew the power of her charms full well. Her waving auburn hair and white skin were a splendid frame for the large grey eyes which gazed with such well-feigned shyness at her middle-aged admirer. Barely nineteen, she was fully developed, and her rounded breast rose and fell with simulated agitation. Poor Grünenthal little dreamed that the whole scene had been carefully rehearsed before his arrival.

"My beautiful darling," he said, sighing like a lovesick schoolboy, "how fascinating you are! Did you like the gowns I ordered for you? Come and sit beside me and tell me. You are not wearing my pendant this morning."

"No," the girl replied. "Mother says that diamonds are not in good taste with this dress. I should love some emerald

earrings ; they would suit my hair and the dress also."

"You shall have them ; I will go at once to the jeweller Schlesinger and tell him to send you several to choose from. You know I can refuse you nothing, sweetheart. Now give me a kiss, for I have something very important for you."

The kiss was given hesitatingly, but at the touch of her red lips Grünenthal seized her hungrily, fiercely almost, and cried : "Oh, my darling, how I love you ! When will you be all mine ? Your kisses madden me, but they do not satisfy."

"But you cannot marry me, Paul," Emma Gotz simpered. "You know you are married already."

"Sweet innocence, there are other things besides marriage, but of course your pure mind cannot understand what I mean by that. Never mind now ; I must give you my latest offering."

Drawing a bulky envelope from his pocket, he pressed it into her hands.

"In this are a hundred thousand marks ; five thousand pounds in English railway bonds. Thus I free you for ever from the possibility of again becoming poor. If anything should happen to me at any time you must let no one know that you have them."

"Oh, Paul, you *are* generous," the girl exclaimed. "I do believe you truly love me. But what can happen to you that makes you speak like that ? You are quite pale ! "

"Nothing, nothing, sweetheart, of course ; it's just a thought. Lately I have been altogether too lucky. Now, *au revoir*—and remember my words."

Herr Grünenthal again crushed the girl to him, kissing her hair and brow, and then rose to leave, reluctantly enough. It would have been better had he been able to hear the shrieks of laughter which greeted the slam of the door, and in which a man's deep voice joined heartily.

PAUL GRÜNENTHAL walked thoughtfully to his own apartment. The mention of his wife had made him sad. What was she doing and how were his two children ? True, he sent them money in plenty—but that was merely in order to ease his conscience. Why had Fate caused him to meet Emma Gotz ? Certainly until he met her life had been dull and monotonous, but what was waiting for him at the end of this feverish existence ? Did he really love the girl ? What if his theft of the many thousands of bank-notes were discovered some day ? Ruin, disgrace, and prison would be his share then.

Feeling unusually depressed, he entered his bachelor home. His servant came forward and informed him that a gentleman from the Reichsbank had waited for some time and had only just left. He had told the servant to request Herr Grünenthal to call at the Director's office in the morning. His guilty conscience sensed ominous news in this message. Did they suspect already ? At all costs he must rid himself of the bundle of bank-notes still in his safe. Where could he hide them securely ? Feverishly, Grünenthal entered his library and locked the door ; then he manipulated the combination of a small safe in the wall and drew from it a bulky package of bank-notes of various values. These he proceeded to examine one by one with a powerful lens, spreading them out before him on the table. Could they be used ? was the problem which troubled him. His stock of ready money was fast dwindling, for in reality his winnings at the races had been insignificant. No, he finally decided with a sigh, several of them had obvious faults—for the moment it would be too risky. Better, far better, to reduce the mad expenditure to which he had given way the last few months. Even constant winnings on the Turf could hardly explain his sudden accession to wealth. That was how people were always found out, he reflected. They never could refrain from spending more than was compatible with their position.

For a long time he sat with head bowed on his hands and reviewed the past. Night had come when at last with a sigh he rose and switched on the table lamp. As he did so, an icy numbing shock contracted his heart, for in the mirror above the mantel he had caught sight of a face peering out from behind the curtains. Could it be the police—already ? Trembling and shaking in every fibre, Grünenthal returned to the table, where the damning evidence of the stolen notes was in full view of the hidden watcher. Quickly he gathered them together and, snapping an elastic band round the bundle, threw it into his safe and slammed the door. Then he turned to face the intruder, but the latter had evidently guessed that the mirror had betrayed him, for at the same instant a lithe form stepped from behind the heavy curtain, a long ugly knife gripped menacingly in one hand. The man's face was hidden by a scarf wound about the lower part, and his cap was pulled down, hiding the eyes. With a gasp of relief Grünenthal retreated to the table, assured that this was no detective but a burglar. If he could only reach the pistol which he kept in a drawer ! Instantly, as if the man guessed his thoughts, a sneering voice came from the folds of the scarf :—

"Don't move your hands, Herr Director of the Reichsbank. Your pistol is in my

pocket. I came to get money, but I guess I'll not have any of that which you have just been examining. So we are two of a trade, eh? Criminals both. You rob the State—and I came to rob you."

With the words the intruder pulled the cloth away from his face. It was the young man Lange.

"I am beginning to think I can make more by selling my information to the police," he continued, "for you'll soon be caught, anyhow. But 'honour among thieves,' eh, Mein Herr? What will you pay me if I don't give you away?"

Grünenthal sat down heavily—his brow was wet with perspiration. A slow, dull despair rose like an engulfing flood, paralysing his reason. So this was the end! His secret was a secret no longer.

"I can give you two thousand marks in gold," he said, listlessly; "that is all I have now."

How was he to gain time and destroy that terrible evidence in the safe? Like a foolish refrain the thought repeated itself in rhythm with the throb of his temples.

Lange laughed. "Hand it over, then, but you'll give me those stolen notes as well. I'm not going to let you destroy them. While I have them you'll pay, and more than once."

Grünenthal rose and unlocked the safe; then he held out the bundle—his mind was made up. As Lange stretched out his hand for them, Grünenthal struck him a crushing blow on the wrist with his keys, sending the knife clattering to the floor. At the same instant he caught his tormentor by the throat and threw him to the ground.

"I'll kill you," he said, with a terrible resolve in his voice. "Then you cannot inform against me. You are a housebreaker and I am acting in self-defence."

The man's face grew slowly purple—he raised shaking hands, pleading for mercy. Grünenthal, whose good nature was already in revolt against his own violence, released his grip slightly. Lange gulped long, shuddering breaths of air.

"If you had killed me," he said at last, "you would have broken the heart of Emma Gotz. I am her half-brother."

Grünenthal rose and pointed to the door.

"Go, and for her sake, then—keep my secret."

The man staggered to the door without a word and Grünenthal conducted him to the hall. As soon as he was alone again, he dressed himself in a dark overcoat, pulled his hat over his eyes, and, thrusting the stolen notes into his pocket, hurried out. He had decided on a hiding-place. They might be necessary to him some day when all his money had been spent. Already there was little enough in reserve, therefore he would not destroy them. If after all the Reichsbank did not suspect him, those notes meant ease and luxury and—Emma Gotz.

. . . . . .

AN hour's drive brought him to the cemetery where his mother lay buried. He would hide the money under the headstone. No one would ever think of looking there. It was an easy matter for him to climb the low wall which divided the burial-ground from the open country, and in a short time he was beside the grave he knew so well, straining with all his might to lift a corner of the stone. It was not so heavy as he had imagined; quickly he slipped the package into the ground and allowed the piece of marble to settle back in its place. Thank Heaven, that was over—now he was safe!

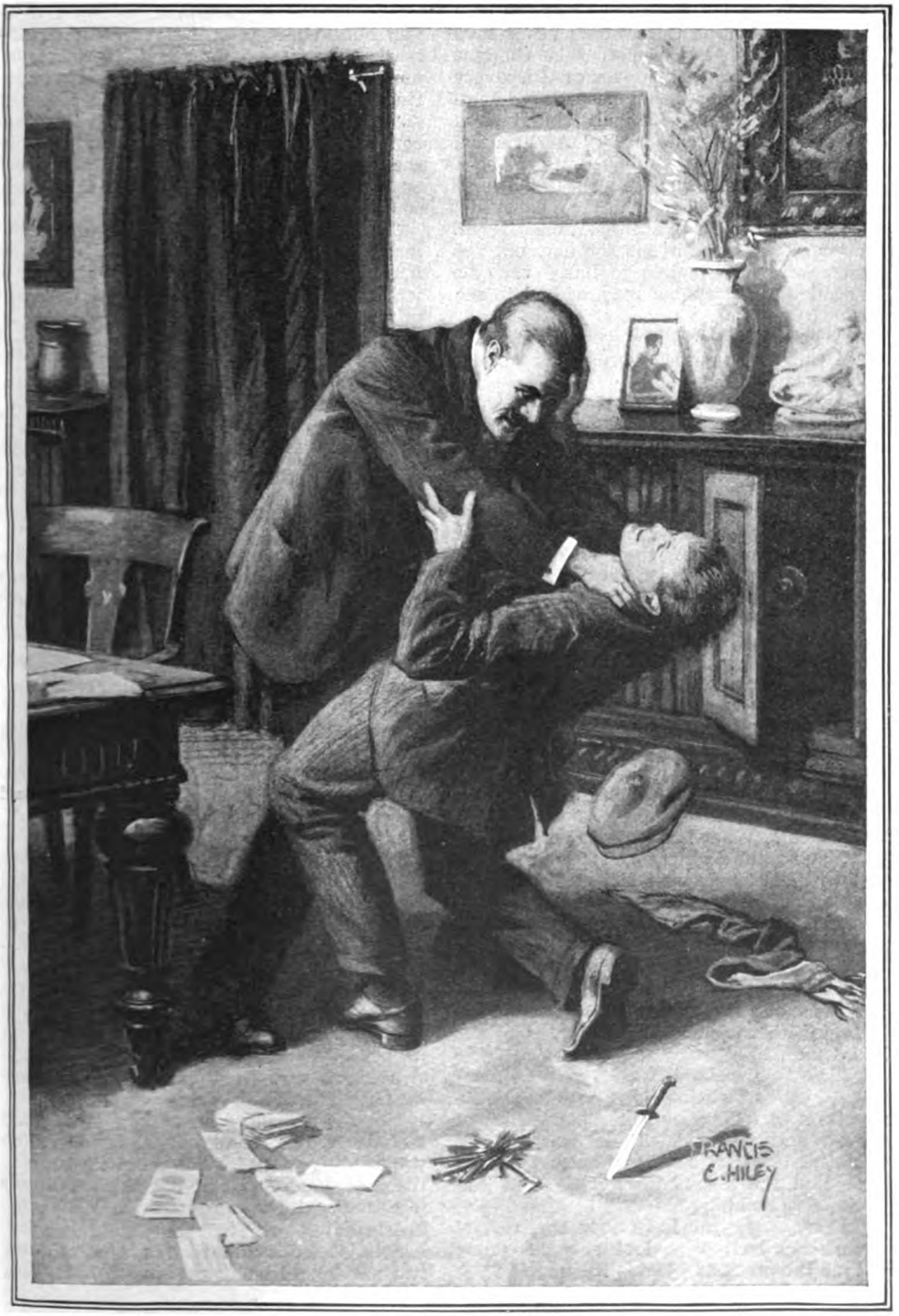
The next morning he called at the Reichsbank and was relieved to find that the Director merely wished to consult him on a technical question; his long experience was invaluable to the bank and it was not the first time that this had happened. What a fool he had been to feel afraid! Gaily humming a song, Herr Grünenthal strode homewards; even stopping on the way to buy a paper. A glaring headline across the centre of the page was like a blow in the face and caused him to stagger dizzily—for a moment the street whirled round in a fantastic dance. Already! and he had felt so happy!

Without attempting to read the details in public he hailed a cab and drove home. When he was safely shut in his study Grünenthal unfolded the paper. There it was—dreadful, horrible! and he groaned with anguish.

"Extraordinary Discovery in a Cemetery," he read. "This morning, whilst replacing a temporary headstone over the grave of a little child, the grave-digger, Putschke, found a package wrapped in a piece of oiled cloth under the base of the stone. Upon opening this he was startled to see a huge sum in brand-new bank-notes inside. The honest man at once carried his find to the police, who counted the money, which to their amazement amounted to three hundred and thirty thousand marks. That this fortune represents the proceeds of a robbery is certain. The owner will no doubt communicate with the Sûreté at once. . . ."

Paul Grünenthal sank back in his chair—aghast, stunned. His first feeling was one of dismay at the mistake he had made. In the dark he had missed his mother's grave—no wonder the stone had moved so easily. It was Fate. Soon the discovery that the notes were faulty ones from the Reichsbank printing works, which should have been destroyed, would follow.

All his care had been in vain. Then came



Grünenthal caught his tormentor by the throat and threw him to the ground.

the agonizing realization that even if he were not suspected he would be a poor man once more. Emma Gotz would never love him now, and hard upon this thought followed blind, unreasoning terror. Discovery was imminent—he would be arrested—imprisoned. A groan of anguish burst from him. What could he do? Fly? And Emma, would she come with him?

At that instant the bell shrilled and a knock came upon his door. Like a beast in a trap he gazed wildly about the familiar room. He heard the voice of his servant, but the words were meaningless to him; then he grasped the fact that a man wished to see Herr Grünenthal.

"Who—who is it?" he gasped, hoarsely.

"He said his name is Levy—he has called about a lottery ticket."

Dazed and trembling, Grünenthal strove to collect his thoughts. Suddenly the possible meaning of this unexpected visit dawned upon him. The lottery ticket—perhaps he had won a sum of money.

"Show him in," he ordered; then he sat down and wiped his clammy hands and glistening brow, where the terror of the last few moments had left its imprint. He must not seem disturbed. The door opened and the little pedlar came in. It was apparent that he had dressed himself in his best clothes for this visit, and his good-natured face beamed with joy.

"Good luck, Herr Grünenthal. Vat a lucky man you are! But a man so generous as you deserves such luck—330,000, think of it, 330,000 has come up!"

Grünenthal started violently.

"What do you mean, 330,000? So you know also? What has it to do with me?"

"Vat should it have to do with you, Herr Grünenthal? It is your ticket, mein Gott. That scoundrel Meyer vanted to buy number 330,000, but I always believe in a double three and I vouldn't sell it to him. Vhy—because never vould he give me such a commission as the noble Herr Grünenthal. Twenty thousand marks you have won in the lottery with the number 330,000. Oh, the lucky number!"

"Twenty thousand, you say?" Grünenthal whispered, sitting down suddenly—the revulsion of feeling almost robbing him of the strength to speak. So he was not yet penniless. That twenty thousand marks gave him the means for flight. But the pedlar was looking anxiously at him.

"Don't say you have lost the ticket, mein lieber Herr—you look so pale—don't tell me the precious 330,000 has gone?"

"Be quiet," Grünenthal shouted. "You and your 330,000." Then more gently: "I'll give you the ticket, I have it in my desk."

"And my commission, eh? All the vay up the stairs I say to myself: Gott, Herr Grünenthal is a gentleman, he vill give me two hundred—vat do I say, five hundred—marks commission for the little ticket, but no—I am a fool. I vouldn't have the impertinence to tell him how much to give me."

"Certainly, certainly," said Grünenthal, coming back from his desk and handing him the slip of paper: "Here is the ticket, and you shall have a thousand marks commission."

"A—thousand—marks! A—thousand—marks! Never vould my friends believe me if I tell them. They vould say—show me in writing, Levy, that the noble Herr has promised you such a commission."

Grünenthal laughed. "All right, Levy—I understand. Here, you shall have it in writing," and he scribbled the commission note and signed it. Hardly had Levy gone, profuse in his thanks, when the bell shrilled again, but now Grünenthal was no longer nervous. What a fool he had been immediately to imagine that he would be suspected! A knock came on the door and two men entered.

"Herr Grünenthal?" they queried. He bowed. "We are police officers and have a warrant for your arrest. Be pleased to come with us, a cab is waiting."

"But why—why do you arrest me?"

"You have been denounced by a Fräulein Gotz and her mother, for passing counterfeit money."

The cruel blow was too much. His Emma—the girl for whom he had sacrificed all—was the one who had informed the police. The officers had to support him, weak and sobbing, to the cab.

At the trial the chief witnesses against him were Emma Gotz and her mother, who swore that they had become suspicious of Paul Grünenthal because he always carried dozens of brand-new bank-notes in his pocket. Even then Grünenthal refused to say what he had done with the money stolen from the Reichsbank, and insisted that the dresses and jewels which he had presented to the girl were bought with sums won at the races and on the Stock Exchange.

He was sentenced to fifteen years' hard labour. Whilst he was being conducted up the winding stairs leading from the court to the cells, Paul Grünenthal wrenched himself free from the two warders and with the heartrending cry, "God forgive you, Emma!" he vaulted over the rail and crashed head-first to the ground. He died instantly.

But retribution awaited the heartless girl that very night. It was Heinrich Lange, who had already spent several years in prison,

who first suspected that quite possibly there might be a connection between the suddenly-acquired wealth of Grünenthal and his former position in the Reichsbank. He had kept a close watch on the erstwhile official with the intention of blackmailing him, and was thus at hand as fourteenth guest on the night when he saw Emma Gotz for the first time. He had noted the splendid jewellery the girl wore and decided that this wealth should also be his. Fate had played into his hands; for the girl, obeying hereditary instincts, immediately fell in love with him. The mother had listened greedily the next day, when he warned her that the money Grünenthal spent so lavishly was probably stolen, and that they had better obtain all they could at once, before the police stepped in. It was this friendly chat which Grünenthal had suddenly interrupted, but the lost bag had come as a useful explanation. Lange had then entered the flat of Paul Grünenthal, and but for the sudden attack, which caught him unprepared, would have carried out his intention of taking all the money and then abducting the girl, in order to rob her of her jewellery. When Grünenthal had spared his life, Lange immediately hurried to the mother, Frau Gotz, and warned her that if she did not wish to be suspected of complicity she must at once inform the police that her daughter's admirer was a counterfeiter. The girl, who was utterly depraved, agreed to this also. During the trial she confided in Lange that she had received five thousand pounds in English railway shares from Grünenthal, of which her mother knew nothing. By doing this she signed her death warrant.

On the night of the tragic suicide of Grünenthal, Lange entered the apartment where the two women still resided. Emma Gotz surprised him whilst he was breaking open the safe in her boudoir, and, not recognizing the dim figure, fired at him with the revolver Grünenthal had given her. The shot went wide, but Lange sprang at the girl in blind rage and drove a knife into her heart. Then he calmly opened the safe and escaped with money, shares, and jewellery. It was when he attempted to sell some of the latter that he was captured. Some months later Lange was tried and sentenced to death. Another result of the trial was that Frau Gotz, who was now in sole possession of all the wealth that Grünenthal had showered on the daughter, was forced to return everything to the Reichsbank, and became once more "Old Mother Latsche, the paper-seller."

HEINRICH LANGE died a coward. Struggling and praying for mercy, he was forced to his knees before the wooden block, but in his terror he managed to twist away as the executioner swung his axe, and a second blow was necessary to end his ignoble life.

Thus Fate meted out punishment to all the actors in this truly human drama—but I still feel sorry for the foolish, if sinful, Paul Grünenthal.

(*Next month: "The Bogus Death Ray."*)

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

Do not miss the opening chapters in the October "Strand Magazine" of the thrilling new adventure serial by

A. CONAN DOYLE

Entitled

"The Maracot Deep."

Greater even than "THE LOST WORLD"!

"I have not spoken of the object of this voyage because I have, for my own reasons, desired it to be secret. One of those reasons was that I feared to be forestalled. . . . But now we are on the eve of our great adventure and no rival has time to steal my plans. To-morrow we start for our real goal."

"And what is that?" I asked.

Dr. Maracot leaned forward, his ascetic face all lit up with the enthusiasm of the fanatic.

"Our goal," said he, "is the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean!"

The Epic of Toby Baskett

By

JOHN RESSICH

Illustrated by
L. G. ILLINGWORTH

" I've fought them all, these ghosts of mine,
But the weapons I've used are sighs and brine,
And now that I'm nearly forty-nine,
Old age is my only bogey ;
For my hair is thinning away at the crown,
And the silver fights with the worn-out brown ;
And a general verdict sets me down
As an irreclaimable fogy."

BAB BALLADS.

THE RECORDER'S stringless monocle fell from his face and rolled across the floor while he stared incredulously. The Lord Chancellor and all the others who were sufficiently close to witness the incident almost gasped as they gazed at Sir Tobias Baskett. That such a thing could happen so early in the day, and within the sacred precincts of the House of Lords, was unbelievable.

Lord Mayor-Elect of the City of London, Sir Tobias had attended with the usual retinue at the House of Lords to receive in state from the Lord Chancellor an intimation of His Majesty's approval of the City's choice. In the midst of the Recorder's flattering sketch of his career from early youth, Sir Tobias, leaning back with half-closed eyes, was heard to be muttering; the sounds resolved themselves into indelicate words; then, half-rising in his chair, he aimed blows into the air at an invisible antagonist. Nor were they half-hearted scoops, but a wicked left followed by a savage right hook.

Consternation reigned. As Sir Tobias came to earth, his first impulse was to bolt from the Chamber and commit suicide. With an effort he restrained himself and sat, hot and agonized, with his eyes on the ground, while the staggered Recorder brought his eulogy to a somewhat tepid close. Afterwards it was sympathetically agreed that Sir Tobias, exemplary in all things, must have slightly exceeded in preparing himself to go through the ordeal and that the heat in the building——

" Quite so, my dear fellow," said one Alderman to another as they left; " let's be charitable above all things."

IT is one of the commonplaces of aphorists that the most gallant deeds go unheralded. Many an obscure citizen, without training and most certainly without desire, has waged a more heroic battle to defend his weekly wage from prowling footpads than many of the stars of the ring while earning their thousands of pounds. And it is but human that these unknown heroes, especially as time relentlessly moves on and the opportunity for adventure fades while increasing respectability further enmeshes them, should sometimes wish that there had been a little, just a little, publicity over their valour.

That this epic tale is written to enlighten posterity may seem to be a pretentious avowal, yet it is the simple truth, for Toby Baskett has never dared tell the tale himself, and, as the years pass and honours thicken, his hopes of ever being able to do so recede. On the same evening as the House of Lords' occurrence, when he gave his presentation dinner in the Mercers' Hall, he vainly endeavoured to fortify his courage to narrative point that he might somehow justify his painful exhibition earlier in the day.

He lives, as befits his station, in a large

villa in the Sutton of Surrey, and is a model of every virtue. Materially he has thriven, and by all standards is Toby Baskett typical of a True-Blue Briton. He is prominent in church, with a pleasing voice resonant in the responses. His City-built coat-tails sway with conscious rectitude as he parades with the others to take up the offertory. He is safe for a subscription to all good works and broad-minded in minor charities to the undeserving. He is a kind husband and an indulgent parent. He never misses a Derby or the Boat Race. He " follows " cricket and can always tell you to a wicket how Glos and Lancs and all the rest are faring. But above all does he " follow " boxing. For many years he has never missed a fight of any importance, and often, at the ringside, between rounds, he sighs as he thinks of his own one Homeric battle, realizing that he dare not now ever tell of that grim lonely struggle against desperate odds.

TOBY is descended from a long line of London wine merchants who were well-established citizens of good repute as far back as the middle of the seventeenth century. On leaving school he went into the family business and was sent out to travel. As he learned the ropes, he gathered from a brother brush he had encountered on his journeys that were he personally to guarantee the accounts to his firm he could demand a much bigger commission. As Toby's dealings were mostly with small grocers and " general merchants " in the country he did not hesitate long, for his friendly adviser had pointed out to him that he would be running much less risk among the unsophisticated yokels than with the conscienceless sharps of the City. The Baskett partners, a brace of uncles, cheerfully agreed.

But Toby began to weary of constant daily journeys to apparently dull-witted rural tradespeople, who, he was finding, had little to learn from their brethren of the City in the gentle art of getting to windward of anyone. Again and again he had suffered close shaves with various of his customers over payment of their accounts. Particularly did one of his clients, as he always facetiously called them, worry him.

The village of Scratchett Green, which lies about a mile east from what was the main G.W.R. line, has hardly changed by so little as a brick since the last time it was visited by Toby Baskett. It is like scores of other such settlements up and down the land.

As you passed out of the village into the open common beyond you found on your right hand the emporium of Ebenezer Painswick, general dealer, and duly licensed in proper form to deal in wines and all manner of alcoholic sustenance. It was the only shop of the kind, and the last building as you cleared the village, and, unlike the universal architecture of the rest of Scratchett Green, it was quite a pretentious modern structure.

As was to be expected, Ebenezer sold anything from safety matches to infants' clothing, but his main business was that of family grocer. Yet, while Ebenezer's trade was good, his own position at that moment was rocky in the extreme, for Ebenezer was an entirely unsuccessful backer of horses, and spent a good deal of his time muttering threats against innocent gentlemen to whom he had not even been introduced, whose animals had failed to run sufficiently swiftly to satisfy either Ebenezer or his creditors. Although in such a peaceful hamlet a policeman should have been a positive anachronism, yet the incorruptible district constable, cruising on his bicycle, had already secured two convictions against Mr. Painswick for dealing in poached game. His licence was in distinct jeopardy, and his next appearance before the Licensing Bench was likely to be his last. Altogether, Ebenezer Painswick at that period of his vocation was what insurance companies term a bad risk—and he was on the books of the house of Baskett to the tune of nearly fifty pounds, duly guaranteed by Toby.

The situation was causing him no little anxiety. As, one summer afternoon, he returned by train towards Mark Lane, following an interview with Ebenezer, Toby vowed to himself that, whatever happened in the case of that particular account, he was finished with this travelling business. Their encounter had been stormy to the point of personal rudeness, and the family grocer and wine merchant had simply jeered at Toby's peremptory demand for money. While Toby waited despondently for his train, various items of information imparted at the booking office, although interesting, had done little to lift his depression. According to the loquacious station-master, whose evidence had largely assisted to sheet home the game-resetting charges, the unsophisticated Ebenezer was apparently contemplating a profitable bankruptcy as a final curtain to a career of quite astounding rascality for such a rustic setting.

Deeply did Toby brood over Ebenezer Painswick. If the situation were as the friendly Scratchett Green station-master had explained it, to employ lawyers was a simple waste of money. He was carted, he told himself bitterly. The fellow's insulting attitude at their last interview

rankled and lifted the position into one of downright personal enmity—into a predicament where the only possibility of any satisfaction was in physical violence.

But Ebenezer was a beefy fifteen stone six-footer, while Toby was no more than five feet seven and weighed a mere ten stone.

The odds were daunting, and despite his constant fitness Toby knew no more about scientific boxing than the average man. During his time at Marlchester, the then Head, a pedantic æsthete who viewed all life through mental ecclesiastical stained glass, had quite definitely discouraged boxing as being vulgar, brutal, and debasing. The punishment for the second offence of fist-fighting was expulsion without argument. The misguided man did his unintentional best to turn healthy, hearty boys into sneaking prigs who settled their natural and inevitable differences by squabbling and writing poisonous verse on each other. One thing Toby could do; he could take punishment. Slow, and inclined to be muscle-bound, in virtue of his one great asset of courage he achieved the School Fifteen at quarter-back, as they called it then. Unless he were beaten for speed he never missed his man, and he would go down to a forward rush and the accompanying hacks with the utmost gaiety.

For one night only did he worry over tackling Ebenezer, then he proceeded to a professor of boxing and arranged for immediate lessons.

"It ain't no good, sir," the thick-eared gent with the short hair and flat nose said despairingly after Toby's first attempt. "Your arms is too short an' you're too set acrost the shoulders. I should try weight-liftin' if I was you. Of course, you can keep on tryin' if you likes. *I* don't mind, fer I 'as me livin' to make, and I'll do me level wiv yer, but you ain't built fer it." Then Toby sensibly told the Professor the truth about his feud and asked him to do the best he could, practising night and morning, to instil the rudiments in one week—he felt he could wait no longer.

ONE day, then, in the following week, Toby, without any impedimenta, set out for Scratchett Green. That morning he had had a final short spar with the Professor—what that gentleman called a "livener"—and his farewell injunctions were proffered to the accompaniment of savage grimaces and most ferocious pantomime. Heedless of his disappointed and blood-thirsty pleading—"It's against all pre*ce*edent, guv'nor, not to 'ave a second," Toby, sportsman that he was, refused to have the moral support of his company, although, seated in the train, his mentor's parting words kept running uncomfortably in his mind to the rhythm of the wheels, "You'll need to 'ave *someone* to 'elp yer 'ome."

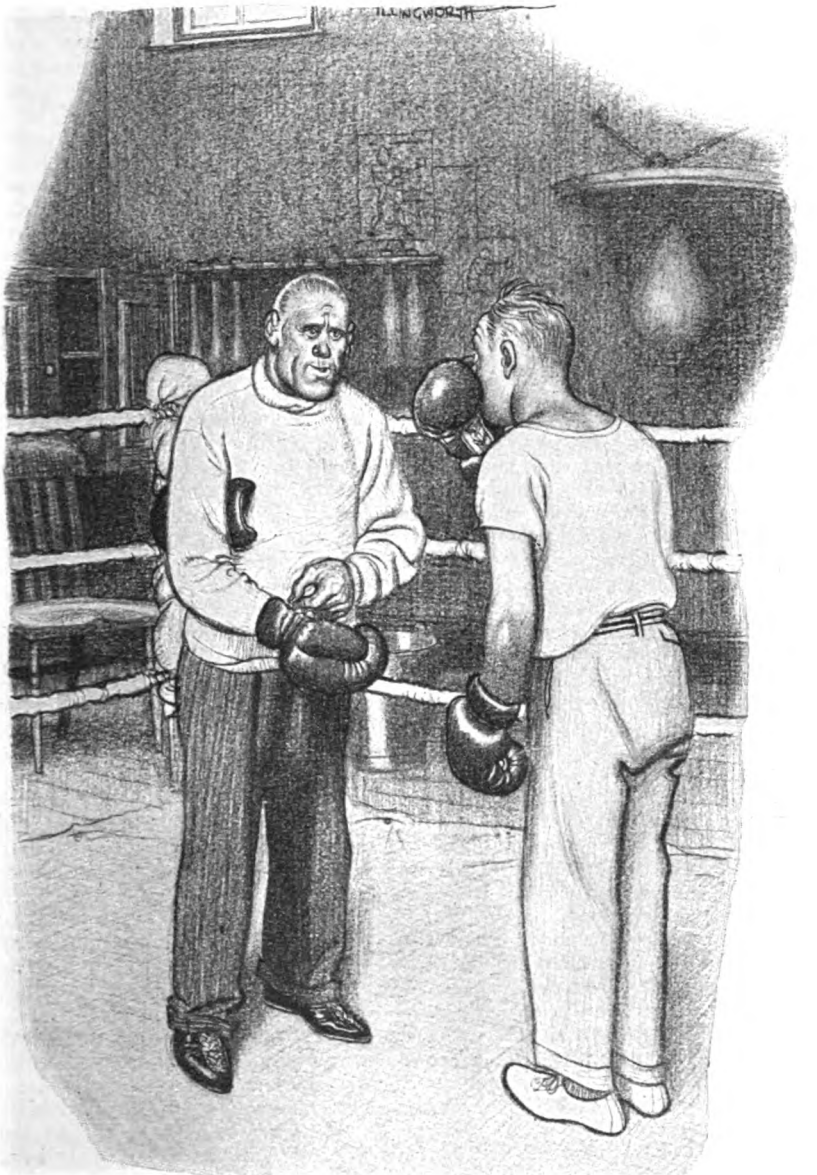
Toby had timed his visit to the shop for one-forty-five p.m. exactly. With the exception of Mr. Painswick, all Scratchett Green sat down to dinner at one o'clock and, after a hasty gorge, slumbered peacefully till two o'clock. For some doubtless well-thought-out reason his enemy did not dine till two. Also, and important, between one and two o'clock he was invariably alone. At the station, when he arrived, Toby confided his plans to the station-master, whereupon that enthusiast cheerfully promised to hold the two o'clock for Town even if he had to steal the guard's whistle. He expressed a regret, which Toby felt to be entirely sincere, that he could not be present himself, but unfortunately duty came first. His good wishes and fervent desire that certain portions of Mr. Painswick's anatomy might suffer severely also rang true.

As he paced the straight road across the common to Scratchett Green, Toby counted his steps carefully. The locals had always called it a mile, but he must be quite certain of his distance—his programme could admit of no variations. Although the record for the School mile at Marlchester stood at five minutes dead, he blushed slightly as he remembered that his own best time had never been below seven. Hampered as he would be with the habiliments of civilization, he would require at least eight, possibly more if he came out badly.

Ninety-eight, ninety-nine, another hundred. He stopped counting on reaching the blind corner of Ebenezer's shop at the end of the village, and, totting up his collection of ticks, fell to mathematics. He knew his own step to be two feet nine, so a little easy arithmetic brought out the total distance at just under the mile. Stuffing away his notebook, without hesitation he entered the lair of the general dealer.

For such a small village it was no mean structure; what house-agents call a double shop with two very large windows. As you entered you found yourself in quite a fair space between the two counters. Beyond, at the back, lay a dimly-lighted area which, according to damning evidence, had been chiefly used for unlawful purposes.

On going in, Toby saw on his right hand the proprietor in shirt-sleeves leaning sideways against the counter reading a newspaper. He glanced up as Toby appeared, leered tauntingly, then ostentatiously continued to read. For a moment Toby's heart beat so hard that he could not frame a sentence. He struggled with a strange nervousness. Presently he found his voice and said quietly, "I have come for my



"It ain't no good, sir," the thick-eared gent with the short hair and flat nose said. "Your arms is too short an' you're too set acrost the shoulders."

money, Mr. Painswick." For answer, Ebenezer, without moving his head, audibly sucked a tooth. The unspeakable vulgarity of the insulting sound made Toby quiver, then he added emphatically, "And I mean to get it, too."

Slowly the large man folded his paper, then, turning ponderously round, he placed his beefy hands on the counter and leaning forward said complacently, "Well, you ain't never goin' to get it—see?"

What Toby had gone there intending to do—how precisely he had meant to open hostilities, he was never quite certain. He stood hesitating. He tried hard to think of a satisfactory excuse for beginning. All the advice of his instructor faded from his brain, but as Mr. Painswick's countenance

slowly contorted itself into a sneer, at the spectacle of that fat insolent face with its glazed red cheeks and cunning black pig's eyes thrust forward so temptingly, his slumbering wrath blazed up. In an instant atavism held him, and with his right he struck out viciously, wildly, but with deadly intent.

As a blow it would have sadly depressed his Professor. It partook more of the nature of overhand bowling than scientific boxing, yet behind it there was ten stone of clean living, good muscle, outraged decency, and the certainty of financial loss. So that in zeal the punch perhaps made up what it lacked in style. Anyhow, it took Ebenezer flush on his slightly bulbous nose with a heartening squelch and sent the luckless general merchant staggering back with a rattle and clatter against his shelves of merchandise. Heedless of a small shower of cocoa-tins, Mr. Painswick uttered an agonized bellow; he clapped a hand on his injured snout; then with violent threats he charged round the end of the counter.

IT was well for Toby's sense of fairness that he had refused to allow the Professor to accompany him. Had that celebrity witnessed his next move, assuredly he would have heaved Toby out of the shop and taken over the whole contract himself—it would have hurt his professional pride beyond endurance. On seeing his bulky adversary rushing forward to annihilate him, Toby lost all the past week's injunctions—the ineradicable instinct of youth surged over him. Stooping, he jumped in and took his man low, incidentally telescoping his bowler hat on the provision merchant's paunch. As they went down in a heap, Ebenezer's wildly-clutching hand closed on the edge of an already-tilted barrel of early Ne Plus Ultra pippins. Toby was first to his feet with the help of an open box of kippers placed on the edge of the opposite counter. The box crashed down, burst on the floor, and the contents slithered about to mingle their sheen with the brilliant red of the Ne Plus Ultras.

For a man of his bulk the foully-enraged dealer was on his feet with wonderful nimbleness, but now that the issue had been joined, Toby's brain worked. The sight of his opponent's well-blooded face encouraged him. Action cleared the vagueness and his tutor's oft-repeated admonition rang in his ears. "Wotever 'appens, don't never let 'im get 'old on yer."

He jumped back, wrenched his battered hat from his head, and, throwing it in his adversary's face, led off with a couple of sharp lefts at the grocer's middle, and, although he slipped heavily on the herrings as he dodged the retaliatory blow, he was up and attacking briskly before the infuriated Ebenezer could take advantage of the turn.

To and fro with hearty ill-will they smashed and surged amidst the apple from our distant Dominions, the egg of Ireland, the ham of Chicago, and the kipper from far Loch Fyne. The overturned scales rattling amongst their feet, although a hampering adjunct, lent a musical note in contrast to the swift crash of the egg and the slower crunch of the apple. Overhead, an uneven canopy of onion strings, fly-papers, and toy balloons waved rhythmically in the agitated air. Although both were often down on the mosaic of the littered floor, Toby was now settling to business and boxing really well, while dodging his antagonist's wild swings with ease. His hit, duck, and side-step would have cheered the Professor. All over the now well-strewn shop, with admirable judgment he avoided the flailing swipes of his panting, cursing opponent, whom he pelted steadily amidships as Mr. Painswick's stock gradually gathered round their feet.

Yet in that comparatively confined space Toby was handicapped, and, as he grasped the ominous fact that his debtor was designedly keeping between him and the door, he realized too late that he should have lured him out into the open. Clearly he saw his deadly danger. At last Ebenezer, with a grunt of satisfaction, got home a devastating right-hand swing that caught Toby a stinging buffet on the ear and sent him reeling towards the back premises of the shop. In a vain endeavour to save himself he grasped a towering column of graded metal pots and, waltzing with it, spread clattering havoc in the dim recesses of the store. Eagerly did Ebenezer charge forward to abolish his foe, but as he took off with his right foot he stepped on an errant kipper, and on one leg, with outstretched arms and body well forward, he shot backwards out through his own door.

Although he only sustained the pose for a fraction of time, and that involuntarily, it was more elegant than anything Mürren or St. Moritz ever witnessed. Not even the mighty Phidias conceived anything so artlessly graceful, although the inelegance of his attitude when the man of hams and cheeses collapsed flat on his face would have shocked the great sculptor almost as much as the language that followed the crash.

But just as a flight of eagles saved an army; as the geese saved Rome, the geese of Scratchett Green saved Toby. Most curious of birds, alarmed at this uproar disturbing their normal peace, and interested in the apples that in rapid succession were being propelled towards their greedy beaks,

With admirable judgment he avoided the flailing swipes of his panting, cursing opponent, whom he pelted steadily amidships as the stock gradually gathered round their feet.

they assembled on the grass opposite Ebenezer's emporium and raised their voices in vociferous comment.

As she had done now for many years—indeed, ever since Mr. Painswick had delighted the little community by hoisting the signal that he had been empowered to supply what to most of the village was the staff of life—Dame Martha Harkaway, spinster, age uncertain, cautiously put her hoary head out of the door of her house, "three along" from the shop of the man whose brain at that moment was ringing with the single idea of murder, slow and horrible. With an unfading recollection of an extremely embarrassing encounter with the vicar, it was her habit always to take a preliminary survey before venturing to slip along to Ebenezer with an empty jug under her apron. For a moment she could not understand what had wakened her. It still was a full half-hour from the time at which she unfailingly made her call on Ebenezer. The cackling geese riveted her attention. What could be causing their alarm? Then the noise of the convulsion stirring the grocery struck her. Martha stood petrified as, following the amazing spectacle of the spate of pippins, a fine uncut Dunlop cheese trundled out ponderously in pursuit of a more volatile Gouda. Then the proprietor, bloody-faced, and so swiftly that he came like a stone from a catapult, shot out backwards on one leg and with a resounding smack lay prone on the pavement outside his door.

As Martha hirpled to the scene, from the bowels of the shop came a spasmodic rumbling bump and roll as Toby, heavily and painfully involved with the metal pots, struggled to regain his footing amongst the general havoc in the rear premises. Martha glanced for a brief instant at the pageant, then, throwing up her wrinkled visage, she closed her eyes like a drinking hen and rent the air with screeches, punctuated with cries of "Murder!" As yell followed scream from the vigorous old dame's weasand, the manhood of Scratchett Green rallied to the call. From sofa, chair, and bench they tumbled and rose, yawned, rubbed their eyes, and sallied forth to see whose house was aflame. Little thought had any one of them that such a benefit performance was being staged for their edification.

But Martha's vocal intrusion also brought his desperate situation home to Toby. The breathless, battered, but hotly incensed Ebenezer, now squealing with rage, was still between him and the door. Abandoning defence in his supreme anxiety to escape for his train, he banged right and left in his opponent's face, and as the utterly

discomfited provision merchant collapsed among the wreckage, leaving his hat as a trophy, Toby darted past and took to his heels.

When he started on the station mile, he heard behind him other voices join Martha's diminishing cries. Ebenezer Painswick adopted devious methods for keeping Scratchett Green in his debt, and his debtors rallied to his cause. As soon as the first-comers grasped the situation, as explained blasphemously by the exhausted dealer, they set off after his departing assailant. The others, as they emerged and saw their neighbours in full cry, followed without question.

Toby set his eyes steadfastly on the little station; looking at his enemies would not in any way help him. He had only one

He heard triumphant and threatening shouts rising behind, but he dared not turn.

pace, and he pressed intrepidly forward. Despite approaching sounds of the first spurt of the more speedy pursuers, he soon found himself holding his lead sufficiently well to make him think he was safe, when, with still a quarter-mile to go, the scream of the approaching locomotive sent his heart to his mouth.

Vainly he tried to increase his speed. His feet felt like lead; his thighs seemed as though constricted with steel bands: an acute stitch stabbed his side; he was breathing in short pants through his widely-opened mouth, and his heart thumped as though it would burst. He heard triumphant and threatening shouts rising behind and the sounds of feet slowly but relentlessly drawing closer and still closer, but he dared not turn—he felt that were he to attempt to move his head he would fall. With tightly clenched fists he stumbled mechanically forward. His legs began to wobble. He staggered, but forced himself gallantly on.

On the platform the station-master was delightedly explaining the position to the interested guard. They had opened a carriage door directly opposite the entrance to the waiting-hall. Through its outside door they had a perfect view of the finish. The guard kept glancing at the watch in his hand as the sporting station-master waved excitedly and shouted encouragement to Toby, now tottering drunkenly. With a good thirty yards' lead of the pick of Scratchett Green he floundered through the waiting-hall and was bundled full-length on to the floor of the compartment. The guard's whistle blew almost before the alert station-master had yet slammed the door.

Toby, his clothes a kaleidoscope of crude colours, hatless, breathless, but unmarked, scrambled to his feet and stood swaying, smiling happily in the open window.

"Did you do it on 'im?" anxiously shouted the station-master, moving alongside as the train jerked, then slowly gathered way.

Toby, speechless, nodded.

"Shake!" cried the delighted official.

Toby, leaning forward, extended his right fist and the fingers opened themselves stickily as it was enthusiastically seized.

While the snorting locomotive gathered speed, the bewildered station-master, gradually surrounded by baffled pursuers, stood staring at his upturned palm.

Lying in it, transferred as a kind uncle transmits the half-crown to his nephew, lay the tail of a kippered herring.

'TWEEN DECKS

By

LOUIS KAYE

Illustrated by
BRYCE HAMILTON

THE first time he heard the sound it startled him into a clammy fear. After four nights and days spent in the stuffy darkness of the barquentine's hold, with the apprehension of being found by a short-tempered mate constantly in his mind, his nerves were frayed and on edge. So the sound startled him.

He had heard few sounds beyond those which reached him from the deck or from without the hull. The crash of breaking water had been as persistent as surf on a beach, and it fell on his ears now with the familiarity which street-sounds have for some city-dweller. At times, when he was occupied with his thoughts, he did not hear it at all, so accustomed had his ears become to it. But occasionally a voice or a heavy footstep would sound directly above him, and he never heard these without growing alert, as if some menace were aimed at his being. Yet what he had just now heard was far more disconcerting, because he did not know what it was.

It had sounded like a cough. Once or twice he told himself definitely that it was a cough. Then he argued that it wasn't a cough at all, that it was some portion of the cargo that slipped when the vessel rolled. Yet the argument did not convince him, and he lay quiet and listened.

He lay quiet for a long time. For so long that his uneasiness began to vanish, and his limbs grew cramped by virtue of the limited space where he lay hiding amidst the cargo. He judged that darkness had settled on the deck above him; he even had some vague recollection of a voice ordering a seaman to light the lamps in the shrouds. He reasoned that nobody would have entered the hold after dark without a lantern. So his fear left him.

After awhile the ache in his muscles caused him to stretch out his legs and to shift the position of his body. As he did so some of the cargo moved with a creaking, grating sound and a heavy object slid to port and brought up against the hull with a sullen crash.

Startled for the second time, he cursed quietly but at length. It was not the first time he had resorted to blasphemy since he had been in the hold; earlier in the day, crawling precariously across the cargo, he had lost his grip when the vessel gave an extra heavy roll and had cut his hand on a protruding nail. But his blasphemy was not obscene; it was healthy and boyish and vigorous, that was all.

And it was especially vigorous now because he was unnerved. But it died away like his fear, and he lay quiet amidst the cargo. He felt tired, but more hungry than tired. He had eaten the small supply of food that he had smuggled aboard along with himself. Water he still had in a canvas bag. But his hunger presented a problem that would have to be solved. Pretty soon he would have to go adventuring on the trail of food. It was too early yet. About——

Again he gave a start, and then grew rigid. His gaze sought to see something in the darkness. His ears strained to hear the sound again. Yet it did not puzzle him any more. Again he told himself that it was a cough, and this time he knew that he was right. Somebody had coughed not ten yards from him, and he had thought he was alone.

For awhile he remained still, his eyes trying to pierce the darkness. His brain reasoned with a facility inspired by personal danger. He reasoned that the unknown presence was not a sailor or a mate; neither

would have lain there in wait for him; if they had known he was in the hold there was no cause for them to ambush him, and if they did not know they would not be there.

He waited awhile, and when he did not hear the cough again he said in a low voice :—

" Who's there ? "

A moment of silence, broken only by the swishing of water without the hull. He gazed steadfastly through the blackness, and remained motionless. The cough did not sound again, but when a voice fell on his ears he started as he had started when he had first heard the cough. After what seemed an eternity of furtive hiding, it seemed queer to hear a voice so close to him, even though he expected to hear it. There was only the one word :—

" Me."

" Who's me ? "

There was no answer for a moment, and during that moment even the sea beyond the hull seemed to wait in hushed expectancy. And then there was no answer but a question :—

" Who are you ? "

He grinned slightly in the darkness, and, if his eyes could have been seen, whimsical puckers must have showed at the corners.

" Oh, I'm Lord Egbert."

A suspicion of mirth from the darkness; and then :—

" I'm the Marquis de Falsetto."

The stowaway grinned again; a twinkle must have been in his blue eyes against which the darkness pressed.

" Pleased to meet you, Marquis. Would you like me to tell the butler to light the chandeliers ? "

A vague suspicion of movement and another vague suspicion of mirth.

" Needn't bother; my eyes have got used to the dark. Was it the butler I heard swearing a moment ago, Lord Egbert ? "

He moved his cramped limbs and lay stretched across the cargo.

" Sorry if your ears got in the line of fire, Marquis. I'll put my heavy boots on and kick the butler out. I need a bit of exercise." He fell silent a moment, and then asked with a grin: " How's your cough, Marquis ? "

" Not very troublesome now, thank you, Lord Egbert."

" I thought you were going to die of pneumonia. You'll have to be careful and not go out in the damp. It sounds stormy outside the castle. We'll stay by the fire and smoke a cigar. And that reminds me; you haven't anything in the shape of a smoke, have you, Marquis ? "

" Sorry, Lord Egbert, but I don't smoke."

" My luck's out, then. But you're a pretty poor kind of Marquis if you don't smoke. You aren't too young, are you ? You sound to me as if you aren't much more than a kid."

" That's because your ears are out of repair, Lord Egbert. My hair's grey where there's any of it left, and I measure eighty-five inches round the middle, and I'm bow-legged."

The stowaway screwed up his eyes as if he would confirm the description with his sight. But the darkness pressed against his eyeballs. He remained quiet, the sough of the sea without the hull falling dully on his ears and the roll and dip of the vessel causing his body to move slightly as he lay on the cargo. Then he spoke again :—

" Your voice sounds better than you say you look. I'm disappointed, Marquis."

THE sea's growl rose truculently, and somewhere aloft rigging whined for a moment. Then a lull.

" Maybe you're not a beauty yourself, Lord Egbert ? "

He grinned again. " I'm a perfect specimen of physical manhood, Marquis; twenty-one years old, white, unmarried, and with the face of an angel and blue eyes that make the sky green with envy, and I've got a set of teeth so perfect they've survived every duel I was engaged in. When the chandeliers are lighted you'll see 'em. But since I kicked the butler out I've got no matches. Could you oblige by reaching into your noble pocket ? "

" I'm sorry, Lord Egbert, but I seldom carry matches."

" Maybe you could help an impoverished nobleman by supplying him with a little grub, then ? "

" I would if I could, Lord Egbert. But I haven't dined myself for four days."

" Suffering Moses ! "

" Don't swear, Lord Egbert. My father never allowed swearing in the house."

" I bet your girth's shrunk to something under eighty-five inches after that long fast, Marquis. You ought to have called on me before and shared what I had."

" The trouble is, Lord Egbert, we don't know our enemies from our friends in this darkened world."

" Let's shake, then, Marquis, and vow to help each other through storm and stress. Reach out and give me your hand."

" Sorry, Lord Egbert——"

He was dragging himself forward over the cargo with slow deliberation, whilst his eyes strained to gaze through the darkness.

" Come on now, Marquis, and be a sport. Give me your hand in eternal friendship. I'm just aching to take the hand of a son of

the ancient house of the great de Falsettos. And I don't mind if you've got a girth of eighty-five inches and your legs are bowed, and——"

"No, Lord Egbert. Keep back, lest I puncture you with my sword!"

"What-ho! A threat! And we were going to be such friends. Is it because you think my hand is dirty, Marquis?"

A moment's silence, whilst he gradually drew himself forward over the cargo. And then a voice from the darkness:—

"You sound all right, Lord Egbert. But how can I tell that you have the face of an angel when it is so dark? And even if you have got the face of an angel, I don't see why you must shake my hand. We can be friends without shaking hands, can't we?"

"You speak wisely, Marquis. But I'm all burnt up with curiosity, and if you won't give me your hand, then just let me satisfy myself that you have a girth of eighty-five inches."

A SHORT silence, during which the stowaway ceased his forward crawl. Scarce an arm's length ahead of him someone was crouching. He could not see in the darkness, but he sensed the presence there. And then, yieldingly:—

"Very well, Lord Egbert. Here's my hand."

He took it, drew it toward him, raised it to his lips, and kissed it. It was soft and small, and when he raised his face again he said:—

"Nobody with a hand like that could have a girth of eighty-five inches. I guess your pretty lips have distorted the truth, Miss Marquis. But to prove to me that you're not an untruthful sort of person, would you let me measure it with my arm?"

"No."

He let go her hand; lay quiet a moment trying to visualize the figure in the darkness, and then drew himself to a sitting posture. Overhead on the deck a footfall sounded, and a man's voice was raised in a shout. Close upon it came a savage pandemonium of wind and driven spray and crashing seas; then the tumult faded away in a sullen whine, and the barquentine came back to a more even keel.

When he spoke again, his tone was different.

"Look here, kid, if we're going to live long in this Black Hole of Calcutta there's a lot of problems we've got to solve and a lot of things to get straight. I dunno who you are or why the dickens you're here, but you seem almighty young to me, and as you're a girl I guess it's up to me to be doing something to get you fed. I'm pretty hungry myself, but you must be darned near famished, going without food four days. What made you think you could live without grub, anyway?"

A suspicion of a sigh came to him through the darkness.

"I never had time to think about anything. I just came aboard and hid in the hold and trusted to luck."

"Well, you must be pretty game. How did you get aboard dressed as a girl?"

"I'm not dressed as a girl."

He chuckled. "I ought to have guessed you wouldn't be. But you took a risk, just the same. Must have been something pretty fierce behind you to make you stowaway."

"There was."

"Where are your folks?"

"In Sydney."

"You're going back to them?"

"Yes."

"Oughtn't to have left 'em?"

"No."

"Well, we learn, don't we? You're lucky to have folks to go back to, anyhow. I haven't. And maybe that's why I can play the fool sometimes—there's nobody to get hurt but me, and I'm too tough to bruise. What did you reckon to do in Java?"

"Be somebody's wife."

"Poor kid! Well, we learn! But couldn't you have got any money from home?"

"If there had been any there. Money's scarce in our family. And this is a cheap way of travelling."

"Yes, if we don't get found. I guess you don't know what sort of a mean eye the skipper's got. I had a look at him when he was ashore in Surabaya one day, and I felt I wanted to alter the alignment of his nose. And I'm a pretty tolerant sort of bird at that."

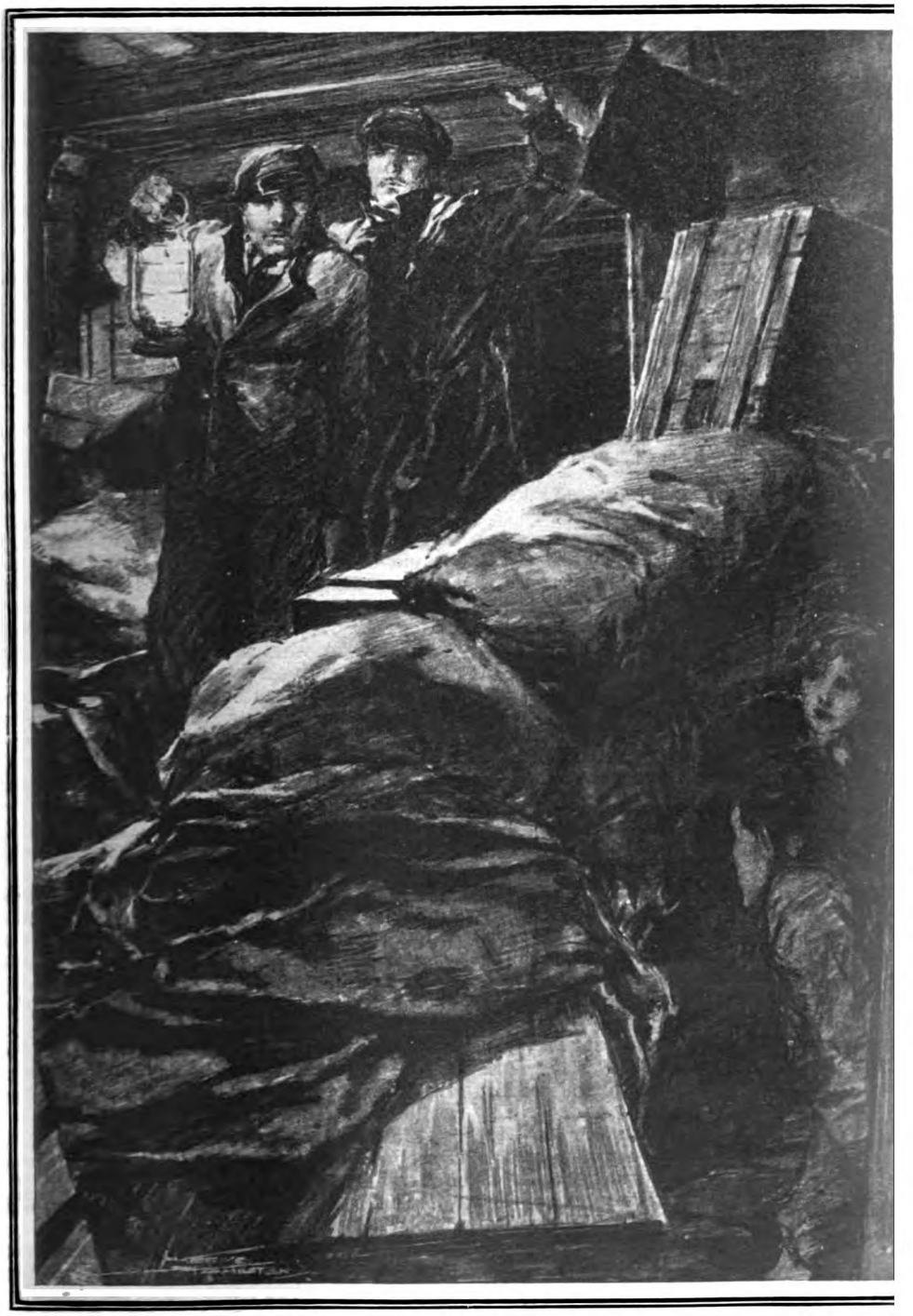
"Well, we haven't been found yet."

"You're an optimist!"

"I had to be. Anyway, I'm not the scared little rabbit that cries over nothing. I ought to have been a boy. I don't mind things rough, and I always had plenty of nerve."

He was peering through the darkness, seeing nothing yet trying to envision the face before him. He formed it out of his own imagination.

"Yes, I guess you have," he said. "I can pretty well tell what you're like. You've got your hair cut short, and you've got freckles that don't in any way interfere with your beauty; and you're pretty small and young and adventurous and boyish—the kind of girl who follows her husband into



"Down!" he said in her ear. "Huddle down, or that light'll get us. Somebody's coming to see if there's any water in the hold."

the jungle shooting lions and tigers. I saw a photo of one in a magazine once—she was sitting on a lion she'd killed and her worse half was standing by looking sick because he hadn't done it. But I guess he looked more healthy when he turned and had another look at the dandy little woman who'd thought him suitable for a husband. Her kind don't crop up except once in a while, and I never expected to find one stowed away in the hold here. And yet"—he chuckled—"darned if that isn't just where I ought to have expected to find her."

No voice sounded before him in the darkness as for awhile he remained motionless and thoughtful. Then the silence began to worry him, and he asked :—

"You aren't crying, are you ?"

"No."

"Don't cry, or you'll spoil everything. That girl I was telling you about—I guess she never cried ; anyway, not when she was scared. But I guess she was a proper woman when it came down to brass tacks."

OVERHEAD more shouts sounded, more treading of feet. Vaguely the stowaway caught the gist of the shouted orders, and knew that sail was being taken in. It brought his thoughts back to the difficulties of the moment. He turned toward the figure that was invisible in the darkness, yet no farther removed from him than the length of his arm.

"I guess you're saying to yourself all this talk's not getting anything for us to eat. Do you think you can hang out a while longer ?"

"Easily."

"You must be pretty weak on it, though. I wish I could lead you into a restaurant and give you the pick of the menu. I guess what's coming your way won't be much better than biscuits and cold tack. Soon as it gets late enough for the cook to turn into his bunk, I'll manipulate my carcass aft and worm up to the pantry."

"You might get caught."

"Well, we can't go without anything to eat, the Almighty having made us the way He did. How have you been getting on for a drink, anyway ?"

"Some kind person left a canvas water-bag hanging from a deck-beam. I got a glimpse of it when he struck his last match to light his last cigarette. Didn't you notice the water was going quickly ? But it's a pretty big bag and maybe you didn't. I suppose I ought to apologize, but I took it first and asked afterwards. Anyway, I intended to ask."

Coinciding with the close of her speech pandemonium raged afresh without the hull and above the deck. A sullen, devastating roar seemed to fill the hold ; it was as if the wind blew through the darkness 'tween decks, yet the air did not stir in the hold. Through the clamour penetrated men's voices, and presently there was a rush of feet on the deck directly overhead.

"Shortening down. Looks as if we're in for a blow. Well, we're dry here. Drier than those fellows on deck," he added, with a chuckle.

"I wonder where we are ?"

"Through Torres Straits, I guess. We seem to have held a decent breeze all the way, and we've been snoring along at a fair bat so far as I can tell."

The clamour grew louder and the vessel heeled till the cargo threatened to carry adrift and pile up against the lee hull. But after awhile the wind eased down a little and the clamour became less deafening.

Half an hour later the stowaway decided to set out in search of food, and began to drag himself over the cargo.

"I can come back if I find it's a bit too early," he said. "Only thing that's troubling me is someone might come fooling round to see if the cargo's staying set. If you see a light coming, crawl down in between here. There's a lot of sacks and things they've used for a bit of padding, and here on the windward side you can't get jammed in, anyway."

He was gone fifteen minutes or more. Often during the journey he had to stop to locate his bearings and to feel his way over the cargo. The vessel was loaded heavily, and the space beneath the deck was limited. The latter part of the way back he spoke quietly at intervals till the girl heard and answered and disclosed her whereabouts. He crawled alongside her.

"No luck, kid. The door in that darn bulkhead aft is jammed or locked, or something. No way through. And there's no chance with the bulkhead for'ard. We'll have to wait awhile. I'll go aft later and see if the door's been unlocked. Maybe somebody'll come pokin' round and leave it open. It's a slim chance, but if I go tryin' to break the door open they'll hear. Looks as if you'll have to suffer the famine awhile yet. How's the hunger ?"

"It's not so bad now. It was at first, but I seem to have got used to it. I can hold out awhile yet."

"If the skipper wasn't such a mean old cuss, I'd bust that door. But I know what it'll be if he catches sight of us. He'd have you on your hands and knees scrubbing out his cabin while he stood in the doorway and told you what he thought of you for having the cheek to associate with his cargo. That's the sort of thing that'd make me remember I tried to be a pug once."

The sea was rising, to judge by the action of the vessel and the thunder of water on the deck. The uproar became more and more deafening, and the craft seemed to rise up a thousand feet and then sink down again.

On deck the stamp of boots did not sound now, and no voice was raised. It appeared that the vessel's canvas had been shortened till no more shortening could be done, and she was left to battle her way through. But when another hour had gone by there was a rending crash above the deck, and immediately voices were raised above the whine of the gale and the truculent growl of the sea.

" Stick carried away," muttered the boy. " Mainmast, by the sound. Well, we can do without that, so long as neither of the others follows suit. See, she's riding easier already."

AN hour or so later something ominous had come to the motion of the vessel. On the deck it could be sensed better than below, but even in the hold the boy was aware of it, and frowned as he gazed through the darkness. Something of the barquentine's buoyancy had departed; when she dipped for'ard it was as if some weight dragged her down and forbade her to rise again, and before she could rise the hungry waters thundered over her forecastle head and caused her to shudder her whole length. And then the darkness of the hold was broken; a yellow light sprayed out at its after-end and threw shadows amidst the cargo.

The boy's grip tightened on the girl's arm.

" Down ! " he said in her ear. " Huddle down, or that light'll get us. Somebody's coming to see if there's any water in the hold. The old tub's riding so heavy there must be a leak somewhere."

It was a seaman who carried the lantern into the hold. He loomed tall at first, and then crouched as he crept forward under the deck-beams. Ahead of him the light spread and splashed sickly yellow over the cargo. And then behind the sailor appeared the figure of the mate. The two came forward and crouched under the hatch.

" Don't seem to be taking water in this hold," came the voice of the sailor.

" No," the mate nodded. " It's all for'ard. The bulkhead's holding, so far."

" But it's old," said the sailor.

" Damned old," agreed the mate. " Well, come on aft. Everything's all right here. Hullo, what's this ? "

He was looking at the stowaway's water-bag as it swung under a deck-beam. The sailor eyed it casually.

" Must have left it there when they were loading. The blasted fools are always forgetting something."

The mate took the lantern and faced aft, and the sailor fell in behind. The figures became smaller, and finally the yellow glow vanished and the hold was filled with darkness again.

The boy pressed the girl's arm and chuckled.

" We've come through that, anyway. And I bet they leave the door unlocked, expecting to come in again later on and see if things are right."

Close on his voice the wind snarled with renewed fury, and the deck resounded with the heavy crash of breaking water. The vessel, shuddering, heeled over; forward she dipped and sagged, and the boy envisioned the water pressing against a bulkhead and threatening to break its way through. The thought of it pouring into the hold sobered him.

" I guess our game's up, after all, kid. We'll have to get out of this."

" Why ? "

" That bulkhead might give. Fo'c's'le's flooded, from what I can make out. The water would come busting through here, and pretty soon the old tub would go down. Best thing we can do is to go aft a bit so we'll be ready to make a dash up to the deck when it happens. We'll have to take the risk of being nabbed if they come back. It'd be better to be nabbed than drowned, anyway."

They shifted from their cramped positions and crawled over the cargo. Near the after-bulkhead they sought the seclusion of a narrow space near the windward hull and right against the bulkhead, and crouched together waiting. For a long time there was no sound save that of sea and wind, and then the boy stirred and spoke.

" I guess the time's ripe to go after some grub," he said. " Things are a bit too confused for anybody to notice much. I'll have a shot at it, anyway."

He left her side and moved parallel with the bulkhead, his fingers groping for the door. But a sudden sound sent him scuttling back to cover. The door had opened and the light of the lantern there showed the rather stout and pale-featured figure of the ship's cook. He was grumbling as he raised the lantern and gazed forward.

" Darn fools, leaving water-bags in the hold like that. Anybody'd think I've got nothing to do but go and pick things up after 'em."

He moved forward, still grumbling. Behind him the door swung invitingly. The boy gave a glance at the girl and then back at it. But he did not stir. The cook would be coming back in a moment, and the light

from the lantern, percolating vaguely aft, made it too dangerous an undertaking.

Shadows moved about the cargo. The cook had gone forward and found the water-bag, and was just turning to come back when the pandemonium overhead suddenly increased. Water crashed and thundered on the deck. The ship lay over on to her beam-ends, and the figure of the cook swayed in the lamplight. His hands sought something to cling to, and the lantern fell, rolled amidst the cargo, and went out.

The stowaways, crouching by the after-bulkhead, waited in the darkness. Presently, as the clamour was dying down, a sound from forward in the hold fell on their ears. The cook was making his way aft without the aid of the lantern. He floundered about amidst the cargo, tearing his clothes, barking his shins. He came near the bulkhead and groped about for the door. His hands touched the bulkhead and he beat it with frenzied fists.

"Where in hell's the door? The for'ard bulkhead's given away and the hold's flooding!" He found the door and dashed through, shouting as he went: "The bulkhead's carried away! The hold's flooding!"

The sound of his voice became vague, and the stowaway's fingers gripped the girl's arm as he frowned forward into the darkness. For a moment there was silence; a lull of sea and wind. And then more voices.

"Where's a lantern?" someone was yelling beyond the bulkhead. "What's become of the lantern? Isn't there another confounded lantern aboard the ship? Hurry up with it, there!"

Then another voice:—

"I'm trying to light it, sir. It won't light. Something's wrong with the wick."

A fresh outburst on the part of the first voice:—

"Get another lantern, then! God in Heaven, aren't there any more lanterns? Go up into the galley and get the one from there!"

A silence; and then the second voice sounded after an interval which suggested that its owner had made the journey up to the deck.

"Galley's carried clear away, sir. But I've got another wick. Wait a minute till I try this one."

An interval filled with muffled blasphemy, and then louder blasphemy.

"It won't fit? Why in Halifax didn't you leave the old one in, then? Aren't we ever going to get a light?"

A trace of defiance sounded in the reply:—

"What's the use, sir, anyway? The darn bulkhead's caved through. We'll have to abandon ship."

"Abandon ship, you lunatic! How can we abandon ship with this sea running? Do you want to get drowned?"

"We'll get drowned, anyway, with the bulkhead caved in."

More muffled blasphemy, and then a voice sounded vague and rather distant:—

"She's riding mighty low at the head, Mister Davis. Haven't you got into that hold yet?"

"Short of a light, skipper. All the lanterns seem to be out of order."

"All right. Come up on deck and attend to the boats. I believe the back of the storm's broken and we might have a chance of getting away. Now that bulkhead hasn't held we won't be long in foundering."

THE voices died away for awhile, and then sounded vaguely on deck. The boy broke from his cramped position and stood upright, the girl rising with him at his side. For a moment he stood still and quiet, his eyes trying to peer through the darkness. Near at hand the door in the bulkhead slammed shut, and he stepped forward and made sure that it had not jammed. Then he turned to the girl.

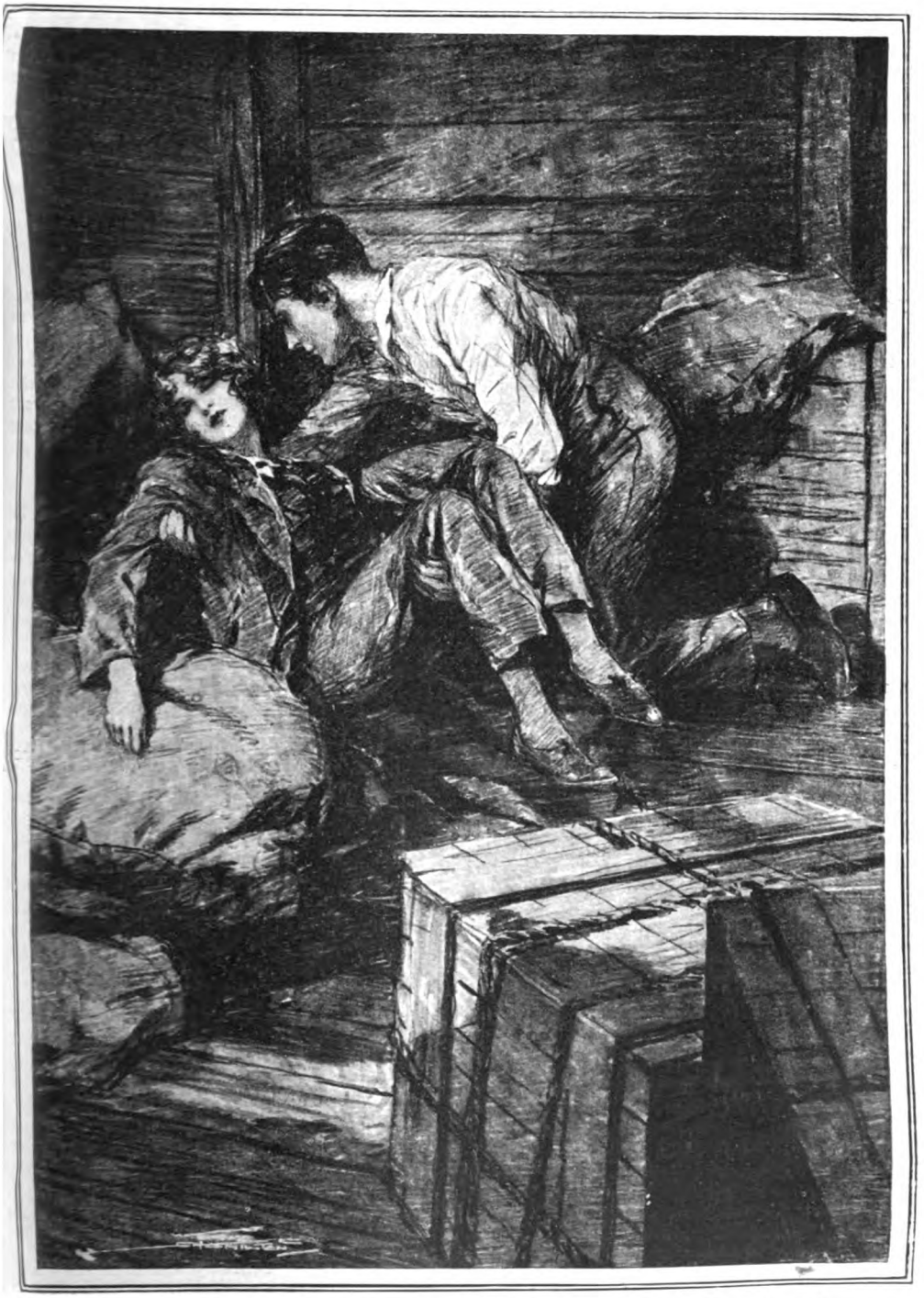
"Stay where you are a minute. I'm going forward a bit. If you hear a shout from me, duck through that door and get on deck."

He moved away from her side, feeling his way forward. There was a damp, musty smell about the hold; it had not been there before. And when he lowered himself down between some cargo he felt water seeping into his boots.

"She's taking water in the hold," he said when he returned to the girl's side. "But I don't reckon that bulkhead's carried away. That cook was half silly with funk. I bumped against the hull coming back, and there's some seams opened and water coming in. Maybe it won't come in very fast, and the seas seem to be easing down. I guess she ought to last till morning. Anyhow, we'll hang close to this door, so we'll be able to make a run for it if they abandon ship."

They waited close to the bulkhead, crouching amidst the cargo. The vessel was still wallowing heavily, but as time dragged on the crash of the seas sounded less and less often on deck. The time came when they did not sound at all, when there was no suspicion of wind whining in the rigging, when there was little sound beyond the lazy stir of water about the ship's hull as she moved sluggishly through the water.

Nor were there any sounds to suggest movement on the deck. Awhile back a voice had sounded, and footsteps had thudded overhead, but they were no longer heard. The ship seemed to have settled down to



He moved to the sleeping figure huddled by the bulkhead, stooped, and picked it up bodily.

peaceful sailing; one felt that the crisis was passed, that the crew were at their stations taking the ship to port. Yet she was riding too heavily to face another storm.

The boy turned to the figure beside him. He could not see, but his searching fingers touched a wrist.

"Say, I'm going to have a shot at getting that grub now."

There was no answer. He lifted the wrist, and let it fall.

"You haven't gone to sleep, have you?"

There was still no answer, and he smiled a little.

"Poor kid! She's gone to sleep. Gosh, but she must have wanted it after all she's been through. Well, I'm going after that grub."

He groped round in the darkness, found the door and passed through, leaving it open behind him. In one cabin a lamp, fixed to the wall, was burning a little. The door of the cabin was open, and when he looked in he could see nobody. On the bulkhead by the bunk a small clock was secured with screws, and beside it a barometer showed its black indicator a long way up from its brass check. A glance at the clock caused him to purse his lips in surprise. Dawn could not be far off.

"I'll have to get a move on," he told himself, "or I'll be getting caught."

TWENTY minutes later he returned to the hold. He bore no food in his hands, but he was chuckling quietly. He moved to the sleeping figure huddled by the bulkhead, stooped, picked it up bodily, and carried it into the saloon. The tired eyes did not open till the girl was lowered into a chair at the table.

He met her stare of surprise with a laugh.

"There you are," he said. "Eat till you can't sit up. That cold chicken goes good. And there's plenty more of it. There's enough grub on the old hooker to feed an army, and we can make up for lost time. Then I want you to come up on to the deck and I'll show you something."

The dawn light was in the saloon. It revealed the girl as she sat at the table—a slight figure, clad in male attire; yet she looked very girlish, very young; and the freckles that the boy had said were there *were* there.

"Where's your eighty-five-inch girth and your bow legs, Marquis?" he asked, grinning.

She smiled slightly as she looked at him. She was still puzzled. She was also very hungry. So she ate first and left questions till afterwards. The boy ate, too, sitting on the opposite side of the narrow table, grinning sometimes and looking at her often.

"Later on," he said, "we'll get some coffee hot to drink. I'd like a drink of hot coffee. Meantime, would you mind passing the salt? And if you feel you'd like to confide in me, you might tell me why you keep looking at me the suspicious way you do. What have I done?"

"Performed a miracle, I think. How did you get on the right side of the captain?"

"I didn't. I didn't get on the right side of anything. Just you wait till you've fed, and then come on up to the deck with me."

When they went on deck the sun was lifting out of the eastern sea. A gentle breeze blew against the sails as the vessel moved slowly through the water. Her hull was down so low that the deck seemed almost level with the sea. Near the port bulwark a boat lay right side up; from the other davits falls trailed in tangles. Aft, the wheel was in beckets.

The boy explained.

"I found her like this when I came on deck, only the wheel wasn't in beckets and she was lying off her course. I dunno whether she's on it now, but you can pick the Queensland coast up with the glasses, and if the old tub threatens to go down there's that boat we can put off in."

The girl gazed round on the deck, where ropes trailed in confusion, and the shadows of the sails were cast in elongated patterns by the rising sun.

"I wonder where the captain and crew are?"

"Picked up by some vessel and on their way to Brisbane or Sydney now, most likely. Or maybe they reached the coast. I guess in the dark they never saw that the old tub didn't go down. It was that fool cook's report about the bulkhead that made them leave her."

Her eyes grew bright with a sudden thought.

"Salvage!" she said.

He shook his head and frowned slightly.

"No, that's the darn trouble. The first thing that entered my head when I came on deck was salvage; I guessed we'd pull a pile out of it and invest in a wedding-cake. But then I remembered that stowaways can't lay claim to salvage. One of those crazy gosh-darn laws that make a man want to——"

She raised her hands and covered her ears.

"Don't!" she said. "I heard you in the hold, and I don't want to hear you again."

The resentment went from his eyes.

"You won't," he said. "I've got nothing to cuss about when you come to think of it. I've got no salvage, but I've got you."

HOUDINI THE ENIGMA

By

A. CONAN DOYLE

Houdini with the trained eagle used in one of his productions.

II.

NOW, having considered Houdini's inexplicable powers, let us turn to his direct relations with Spiritualism.

In public, as is notorious, he posed as its uncompromising foe. It is useless to pretend that it was only the fake medium that he was after. We are all out after that scoundrel, and ready to accept any honest help in our search for him. Houdini wrote in the *Christian Register* of July, 1925:—

> "Tell the people that all I am trying to do is to save them from being tricked in their grief and sorrows, and to persuade them to leave Spiritualism alone and take up some genuine religion."

His attack was a general one upon the whole cult.

But this was not in the least his attitude in private. I suppose that there are few leaders of the movement, and few known mediums, who have not letters of his taking the tone that he was a sympathetic inquirer who needed but a little more to be convinced. His curious mentality caused him to ignore absolutely the experiences of anyone else, but he seemed to be enormously impressed if anything from an outside source came in his own direction. On one occasion he showed me a photograph which he had taken in California. "I believe it to be the only genuine spirit photograph ever taken!" he cried. To my mind, it was a very doubtful one, and one which no sane Spiritualist would have passed for a moment. But, in any case, if his was, as he claimed, genuine, why should he put down all others to fraud? He had another which he showed me with some disgust, but which seemed to me to be capable of a real psychic explanation, however unlikely. The sensitive film had been torn lengthways right down the plate, just as a sharp nail would have done. He assured me that he had put it into the carrier quite intact. It might, of course, have been some singular accident, or it might conceivably have been a sign of the same sort of disapproval, which was a possible explanation of the gravel-throwing in the music-hall of Boston.

His experience with decent mediums was exceedingly limited. He sat several times with Eva during the abortive investigation by the London Psychical Research Society. He wrote to me at the time, saying: "I found it highly interesting." There was no question of any exposure. I believe that he once—and only once—sat with that great voice medium, Mrs. Wriedt, on which occasion nothing at all occurred, as will happen with all honest mediums. There was certainly no talk of any exposure. He never sat with Miss Besinnet, nor with Mrs. Pruden, nor with Jonson of Pasadena, nor with Hope, nor with Mrs. Deane, nor with

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Evan Powell, nor Phœnix, nor Sloane. He claimed to have exposed P. L. O. Keeler, a medium whom I have heard quoted, but of whom I have no personal experience. Speaking generally, it may be said that his practical experience, save with a class of people whom a decent Spiritualist would neither use nor recommend, was very limited. His theoretical knowledge of the subject was also limited, for though he possessed an excellent library, it was, when I inspected it, neither catalogued nor arranged. His book, " A Magician Among the Spirits," is full of errors of fact.

In spite of this very limited basis, he gave the public the impression that his knowledge was profound. To one reporter he said that he had attended ten thousand séances. I pointed out at the time that this would mean one a day for thirty years. His accusations against Spiritualists were equally wild. A man, named Frank Macdowell, committed a peculiarly atrocious murder at Clearwater, in Florida. Houdini broadcasted the fact that it was due to spirit teaching. Fortunately, a resolute Spiritualist, Mr. Elliott Hammond, went into the matter, and showed clearly that the murderer gave his complete disbelief in life after death to have been at the root of his actions. Spiritualism would have saved him.

I repeat that Houdini's attitude in private was quite different to what it was in public. At one time we had him really converted without the slightest intention of causing such a result. It was at Atlantic City, in 1922. He had spoken in a touching manner of his mother, so my wife, who has the great gift of inspired writing—that is, of writing which appears to be quite disconnected from her own mentality—tried if she could get any message for him. It was done at my suggestion, and I well remember that my wife needed much persuasion. We had no sooner assembled in our quiet sitting-room than the power came, and the medium began to write with breathless and extraordinary speed, covering sheet after sheet, which I tore off and threw across to Houdini at the other side of the table. We gathered that it was a moving and impassioned message to her son from the dead mother. He asked a mental question without speech, and the medium's hand instantly wrote what he admitted to be an answer. Houdini was deeply moved, and there is no question that at the time he entirely accepted it.

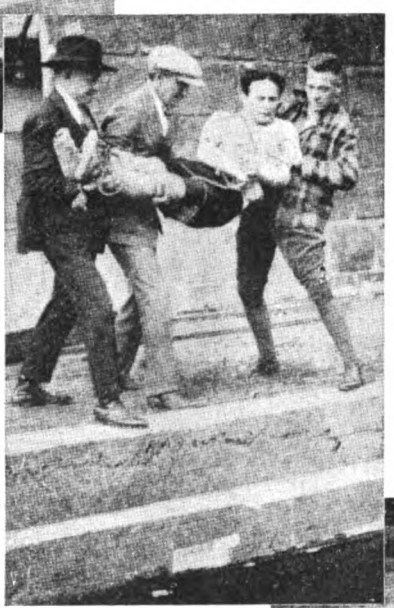
When we met him two days later in New York, he said to us : " I have been walking on air ever since." I published the incident in my " American Adventure," so that he had to explain it away to fit it into his anti-Spiritualistic campaign. The line of criticism which he took was that it could not have been from his mother since a cross was put upon the top of the paper, and she was a Jewess. If he had cared to inquire we could have shown him that the medium always puts a cross on the top of her paper, as being a holy symbol. We consider that such exercises are, in the highest degree, religious. That is a complete answer to the objection. His second criticism was that the letter was in English. This was plausible, but shows an ignorance of psychic methods. If a medium were in complete trance, it might well be possible to get an unknown tongue through her. Such cases are not very rare ; but when the medium is not in trance, but writing by inspiration, it is the flood of thought and of emotion which strikes her, and has to be translated by her in her own vocabulary as best she can. Thus the second criticism falls to the ground. But in any case one would imagine that he would have nothing but respect and gratitude for one who tried to help him, with no conceivable advantage to herself. No sign of this appears. It is the same queer mental twist which caused him first to take the name of the great Frenchman, and then to write a whole book, " The Unmasking of Houdin," to prove that he was a fraud.

BUT there was another very curious and suggestive incident in connection with that sitting at Atlantic City. As Houdini, much moved, rose from the table, he took up the pencil, and, bending to the paper, he said: " I wonder if I could do anything at this ! " The pencil moved and he wrote one word. Then he looked up at me and I was amazed, for I saw in his eyes that look, impossible to imitate, which comes to the medium who is under influence. The eyes look at you, and yet you feel that they are not focused upon you. Then I took up the paper. He had written upon it the one word, " Powell." My friend, Ellis Powell, had just died in England, so the name had a meaning. " Why, Houdini," I cried, " Saul is among the prophets ! You are a medium." Houdini had a poker face and gave nothing away as a rule, but he seemed to me to be disconcerted by my remark. He muttered something about knowing a man called " Powell " down in Texas, though he failed to invent any reason why that particular man should come back at that particular moment. Then, gathering up the papers, he hurried from the room. It is probable that at that moment I had surprised the master secret of his life—a secret which even those who were nearest to him had never quite understood. Each fact alone may be capable of explanation, but when a dozen facts all point in the same

direction, then surely there is a case to answer.

I have said that the Houdini mentality was the most obscure that I have ever known. Consider this manifestation of it. My wife and I were, as I have shown, endeavouring to help him, with no possible motive save to give him such consolation as we could, since he was always saying that he wished to get in touch with his mother. Such consolation has often been given to others. Even if we suppose, for argument's sake, that we were mistaken in our views, we were, as he often admits, in dead earnest. Then, as we rose, he wrote down the name Powell, which meant much to me. If it was not written under psychic influence, why should he write anything at all, since no one asked him to do so? He saw the difficulty when he had to explain it away, so in his book he says that it was a "deliberate mystification" upon his part and that he wrote it entirely of his own volition. Thus by his own showing, while we were honest with him, he was playing what I will charitably describe as a practical joke upon us. Is it any wonder that we look back at the incident with some bitterness? He does not attempt to explain how it was that out of all his friends the name that he wrote was the very one which might well have wished to come through to me. There is a limit to coincidence.

Bound hand and foot—



Houdini is thrown into the water—

but quickly makes his escape.

It is a curious fact that neither my wife nor I knew what was in the mother's letter until I read it in his book. It was written so swiftly that the medium could at best only have a very vague idea of its purport, while I never even glanced at it. Now that I read it, it seems to me to be a very beautiful letter, full of love and of longing. As I have explained, the thoughts are given and are largely translated by the medium. Therefore, there are some sentences in which I can recognize my wife's style of expression, but the greater part of it is far more fervid—one might almost say more Oriental—than anything I have known my wife do. Here is an extract:—

> "Oh, my darling, my darling, thank God at last I am through. I've tried, oh, so often. Now I am happy. Of course, I want to talk to my boy, my own beloved boy. . . . My only shadow has been that my beloved one has not known how often I have been with him all the while. . . . I want him only to know that—that—I have bridged the gulf—that is what I wanted—oh, so much. Now I can rest in peace."

It was a long and very moving message and bore every internal sign of being genuine. There is no question at all in my mind that Houdini was greatly shaken at the time and for some days afterwards. His objections were all afterthoughts in order to save the situation.

When my friend, Miss Scatcherd, was in New York, two

years ago, she saw a good deal of Houdini, and got, I fancy, as nearly into his complete confidence as anyone could do. To her, as to me, he showed no animosity to psychic things, but, on the contrary, he was eager to show her the one and only true medium whom he had discovered in America. Miss Scatcherd was not, I gather, much impressed by his find, having known many better ones. She did not fail, however, to point out to him that in admitting the one medium he had really given away his whole case, and agreed that the Spiritualists had a solid foundation for their cult. She then accused him of being a powerful medium himself, for she is a strong sensitive, and all her psychic powers told her that he was the same. She also scolded him in her charming, good-natured way for having behaved shamefully in the "Margery" case, which he did not deny. The climax came, however, when, far out on the Atlantic, she received the following wireless message :—

> "*From a sensitive to a sensitive. Wishing you a pleasant voyage.—Houdini.*"

A sensitive is a medium, and what is the logic of denouncing all mediums as frauds from the public platforms, and at the same time declaring in a telegram that you are one yourself ?

LET us now follow a fresh line of thought. There can be no question at all, to anyone who has really weighed the facts, that Ira Davenport was a true medium. Apart from the evidence of thousands of witnesses, it is self-evident that he could at any time, by announcing himself and his brother as conjurers, and doing his unique performances as tricks, have won fame and fortune. This would seem a dreadful thing to do from the point of view of a good Spiritualist, and the Davenports went to the last possible limit by leaving the source of their powers to the audience to determine. Houdini has endeavoured to take advantage of this and to make out that Ira admitted in his old age that his feats were tricks. To clear away such an idea, I append the following letter, written by Ira in 1868 to *The Banner of Light* :—

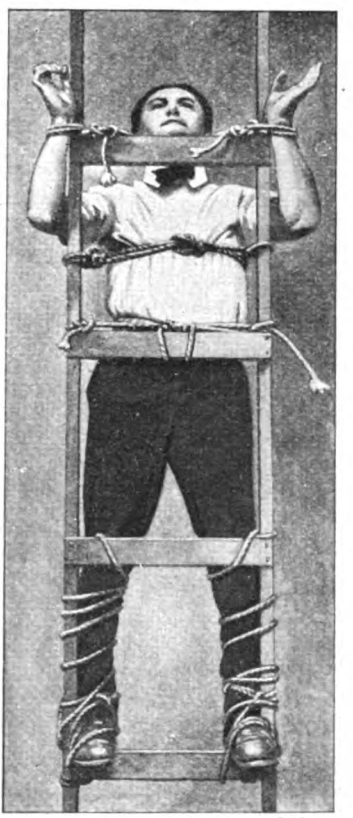
> "It is singular that any individual, sceptic or Spiritualist, could believe such statements after fourteen years of the most bitter persecution, culminating in the riots of Liverpool, Huddersfield, and Leeds, where our lives were placed in imminent peril by the fury of brutal mobs, our property destroyed, all because we would not renounce Spiritualism and declare ourselves jugglers when threatened by the mob and urged to do so. In conclusion, we denounce all such statements as base falsehoods."

We happen to be particularly well informed about the Davenports, for, apart from long statements from many well-known people who examined them, there are three books by people who knew them well, and who could not possibly have been deceived had they been swindlers. The smaller book, by Orrin Abbott, covers the early days, and the author tells how he was intimate with the brothers when they were little boys, and how at that time he had every opportunity of observing and testing their wonderful powers. These seem, as is often the case with mediums, to have been stronger in childhood than in later life, the power of levitation being one which Abbott witnessed, but which is not recorded of them elsewhere. The second and fullest is Dr. Nichol's biography, while the third and most valuable is found in the "Supramundane Facts" of the Rev. J. B. Ferguson. Ferguson was a man of very high character, with a notable record behind him, and he travelled with the Davenports during their tour in England. He was with them at all hours of the day and night, and he has left it on record that their experiences when in private were quite as wonderful as anything that the public ever saw. It is notable that these well-attested feats included not only the instant freedom from ropes, however carefully fastened and sealed by the spectators, but also, on occasion, the freedom from handcuffs or twisted wire, and the power of opening locked doors. In a word, the Davenport powers were the Houdini powers, save that the latter had physical strength and agility which may have helped him to extend them.

My argument now begins to emerge. If it be true that the Davenports were real mediums (and let the inquirer really read their record before he denies it), and if Houdini produced exactly similar results, which have in each case been inexplicable to their contemporaries, then is it conceivable that they were produced in entirely different ways ? If Ira Davenport was a medium, then there is a strong *prima facie* case that Houdini was a medium too. Now we come upon some explanation of the cryptic saying of the Rabbi by the graveside : "He possessed a wondrous power that he never understood, and which he never revealed to anyone in life." What could that power be, save what we have called the power of the medium ?

I would not, in probing this difficult problem, pass too lightly over the considered words of the Rabbi, that he had a

wondrous power and did not himself understand it. This phrase fits very exactly into what has been stated to me by those who were nearest to him in life. "If it was so, he did not know it," they have answered when I hinted at my conclusions. It seems hard to comprehend, and yet there may be something in this view. He was not a clear thinker, and he had no logical process in his mind. That surely is evident when in the same breath he denies all mediumship and claims to have discovered the greatest medium in America, or when he scoffs at spirit pictures but brings me a very indifferent one which he had taken himself. Imagine that such a man finds himself one minute inside a box; there is an interval of semi-trance during which his mind is filled with a vague feeling of confused effort, and then he finds himself outside the box. There is no obvious intervention of spirits, or of any outside force, but it just happens so. He has the same power in emerging from fetters, but he has no sort of philosophy by which he can explain such things. If we could imagine such a very strange and unlikely state of things as that, it would, at least, have the merit that it would give some sort of honest and rational explanation of a good deal which at present is dark. It is no unusual thing for a medium to fail to understand his own results, but it would certainly seem almost incredible that anyone could have such results for many years and never correlate them with the experience of others. I, as his former friend, would welcome such an explanation if it could be sustained, for it would clear him of certain shadows which linger in the mind.



Houdini freeing himself from a ladder to which he has been tied.

But how does the good Rabbi know that he did not understand it? Only one man could say with authority, but he has passed away with closed lips, leaving, however, many signs behind for those who care to follow them. There is one thing certain, and that is that the fate of the Davenports must have been a perpetual warning to Houdini. They had been ruined and hunted off the stage because it was thought that their claim was psychic. If his powers were to be drawn from that source, and if he were to avoid a similar fate, then his first and fundamental law must be that it be camouflaged in every possible way, and that no one at all should know his secret. If this be granted, a great many disconnected points become at once a connected whole. We see what he meant when he said that his own wife did not know how he produced his effects. We see, too, the meaning of his relation to the Davenports. We understand the voice of which he spoke. We comprehend dimly the unknown power of the Rabbi. We can even imagine that a campaign against mediums, fortified by the knowledge that false mediums do exist, would be an excellent smoke-screen, though probably he had never thought out what view the unseen powers might take of such a transaction. I cannot say that all this is certain. I can only say that it covers the facts as I know them.

Of course, I know that he had a trick box. I know also who constructed it, and the large amount that he paid for it. When I know also that he could do his escapes equally well in any local box, I am not inclined to attach much importance to the matter. He was a very astute man, and what he did he would do thoroughly.

Houdini is curiously contradictory in his account of the methods of Davenport. In his book, "A Magician Among the Spirits," he says:—

> "Their method of releasing themselves was simple. When one extended his feet the other drew his in, thus securing slack enough in the wrist rope to permit working their hands out of the loops. The second brother was released by reversing the action."

But, as I have shown, in a letter to me he said:—

> "I know for a positive fact that it

was not essential for them to release the bonds in order to obtain manifestations."

So the previous explanation would seem to have been a fake in order to conceal the real one.

In another letter he says :—

" I am afraid I cannot say that all of their work was accomplished by spirits."

The " all " is suggestive. I would be the last to suggest that all of Davenport's, or indeed that all of Houdini's, work was due to spirits. For that matter, we have to remember that we are ourselves spirits here and now, and that a man may very well be producing psychic effects without going beyond his own organism. It is in this sense that I suspect the Houdini results as being psychic, and I do not at all insist upon the interposition of outside forces. The two things are not far apart, however, and very easily slide into each other. There is, I hold, the medium's use of his own power, there is a vague borderland, and there is a wide world beyond where his power is used by forces outside himself. I am convinced, for example, that raps may be produced voluntarily by a medium by a psychic effort, and I am equally convinced that at another stage these same raps may be used for purposes quite beyond his knowledge or control.

Is it possible for a man to be a very powerful medium all his life, to use that power continually, and yet never to realize that the gifts he is using are those which the world calls mediumship ? If that be indeed possible, then we have a solution of the Houdini enigma. One who knew him well and worked with him often wrote to me as follows :—

" Often he would get a difficult lock. I would stand by the cabinet and hear him say : ' This is beyond me.' After many minutes, when the audience became restless, I would say, ' If there is anything in this belief in Spiritism why don't you call on them to assist you ? ' And before many minutes had passed Houdini had mastered the lock. He never attributed this to psychic help. He just knew that that particular instrument was the one to open that lock, and so he did all his tricks."

It is only fair to state, however, that this correspondent, who was in a good position to know, would not admit the mediumship. And yet if " that particular instrument " was, as stated, an appeal to spirits, it seems difficult to claim that the result was natural.

I would not limit my hypothesis to the idea that it was only when he met the Davenports that he first developed these strange powers. He seems only to have met Ira in 1909, and he had certainly done many marvellous feats himself before then. But the history and object-lesson of the Davenports must have been well known to him, and have shown him what to avoid.

MRS. HOUDINI, for whom I again desire to express my respect, has told us that her husband left behind him a cipher which would be a test of his return. The action in itself shows that his objections to Spiritualism were not very deep, since one does not propose to use what one really condemns. I have told her that in my opinion, if the test is in the nature of figures, or a name, or meaningless words, then she will never get it. Such things are artificial, and it is very hard to transmit them. If, on the other hand, the test is an actual message, or sentiment which can be conveyed into a medium's mind, then I think that it is certain that her husband, with his tremendous energy and power of concentration, will sooner or later get back to her It was said that he had some sort of compact with me, but I have no note of the fact, though we often discussed such subjects. I have had several messages since his death which purported to be from him, but none of them contained the conclusive proofs upon which I always insist. There is one, however, which I cannot entirely discard, for it came through a medium whom I associate with some remarkable results in the past—the same Mrs. Wood. in fact, who prophesied his death.

" I am sending you a message from Houdini," she wrote. " ' You were right and I was wrong.' Houdini materialized and said those words plainly, and then he instructed me to send the message to you. He has found that his will on the other plane is subject to a higher power, and that his first great lesson there is in humility. He wants to give this message to the world : ' Seek ye first the kingdom of God.' " That is a message which is worthy of the man who may have uttered it, and on it I will end. Be his mystery what it may, he was a great personality, with many outstanding qualities, and the world is the poorer for his loss. I shall always retain an affection for him, and hope to meet him again and to hear from his own lips even such a message as is quoted above.

For permission to reproduce the photographs of Houdini we are indebted to Mr. Will Goldston, President of the Magicians' Club, a lifelong friend of Houdini, some of whose secrets are published in Mr. Goldston's book, " Further Exclusive Magical Secrets," which reveals Houdini's own explanation of the manner in which he performed many of his tricks.

EXPERIENCES OF
A BOND STREET JEWELLER

My Double

By

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

Illustrated by
STANLEY LLOYD

I.

IT was many years ago that I learned for the first time that I had a " double." A stranger came up to me in Hyde Park, shook me affectionately by the hand, and inquired solicitously after my health, which had given me no cause for anxiety. He went on without pausing: " I saw your father the other day." I asked him, politely, I hope, how my father was, and he replied genially: " Oh, fit as a fiddle." I assured a total stranger that this was rather interesting news to me, because my father had died when I was six years old. And I added, which seemed to disappoint him, that my name was Alfred Corwen. Almost he refused to believe me, but, amused as we both were, we parted without my asking the name of the young man who, according to him, was my " double." Within a week I had forgotten all about the incident.

Long afterwards I learned that my double, if he was my double, was still alive. I had become a salesman in our establishment. Into this establishment I had come as a prentice hand in the gem-setting department of Rappington and Son. Old Mr. Rappington had taken a fancy to me. At his wish (not mine) I was transferred as salesman to the famous shop in Bond Street. As a salesman I venture to say that I " made good," and coming much later on into the possession of a few thousand pounds I was offered, and gladly accepted, a junior partnership. While I was still a salesman more than one customer assured me that he had seen me in places that I never frequent, such as race-courses, horse-shows, and the hunting-field. But I paid scant attention to these affirmations, wondering whether I should recognize my double, or he me, if we should chance to meet. Oddly enough, we did meet, stared hard at each other, hesitated, and passed on. I did not look back. If he did, he must have seen me entering our establishment, for we had met not twenty yards from our swing-doors. I told my wife about it, and she was quite excited, because I had to admit that I was startled by the common resemblance. You can take it from me that I am a very ordinary person, not likely to challenge attention anywhere. I dress plainly and inconspicuously. I look exactly what I am, a man of the middle class who is fairly prosperous. When Mrs. Corwen asked for my first impressions of the other fellow I gave them honestly.

" He looks," I said, " like a sporting peer."

" Alfred! How could you look like him? "

I hastened to assure her that I was only speaking of his clothes, of a marked sporting cut, fashioned, I should think, by some snip who might specialize in such garments. It was just about the time when I had removed, under protest, my whiskers. I am now clean-shaven—and so was he. He carried his head at an angle not affected by me except in rare moments of exhilaration, but his head was like mine. Mouth, chin, nose, and eyes were disconcertingly the same.

" Perhaps," murmured my wife, " he *is* a sporting peer."

" I conceive that to be in the highest degree improbable."

For a day or two it amused the dear woman to address me as " my lord," a joke which I accepted in good part. I am not " her "

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lord, far from it, but she is, and always has been, " my " lady.

Once again I dismissed my double from my thoughts, but, obviously, he was the individual whom my customers had met on race-courses and at horse-shows.

When we passed each other in Bond Street it was about the time when I became a junior partner in the firm—just before the Great War. Both my wife and I had inherited, she from her mother and I from an uncle, a few thousand pounds, which I placed in the business when old Mr. Rappington died. Money had to be taken from the business to settle his estate; provision had to be made for the old gentleman's widow and daughters. I mention this because young Mr. Rappington and I started as partners slightly crippled for want of ready money. However, the credit of the firm was good, but we had to consider ways and means; and it was no longer possible to buy—as had been done formerly—parcels of unset gems and put them away till they were wanted. I doubt, to-day, whether any firm does this, although, of course, they may.

It fell to me to buy in Hatton Garden what diamonds we needed, and we dealt often enough with old Ephraim Vandervell. I liked Ephraim and we never haggled over our business transactions. As a rule, he was kind enough to give me the first refusal of any particularly fine stone that came into his hands. Dealers used to come to old Mr. Rappington, but I, as a junior partner, had to go to Vandervell, who was then nearly eighty years old.

There is always a certain amount of excitement when a big diamond comes into the market. To me its size kills its beauty, and a foolish woman wearing solitaire stones hanging from her ears like drops from a chandelier looks to me barbaric. Nevertheless, a thrill goes through me when I hear of any gem quite out of the ordinary; and my fingers tingle to have the setting of it. So you can imagine my excitement when I opened a curt note from Ephraim offering to show me, and sell me, what he called *the diamond of the year*.

I had been away on a holiday, and had not seen him for two or three months. He was visibly older and more frail. He could have retired from business when he was sixty, but he loved his business.

He took from his safe a large Cape stone that had just come from Amsterdam, where it had been cut. He dropped it into the palm of my hand, saying:—

" It is yours for ten thousand pounds—neither more nor less. Half-a-dozen of our friends are after it."

I was not surprised; and I had heard, as one does, that such a stone was coming into the market. I could only think of three persons, customers of ours, who would buy it at the retail price. Two out of the three would jump at it. I said promptly that I appreciated his having offered it to me first, but that Mr. Rappington would have to see it.

" Put it into your pocket. Take it to him."

" Thanks—no. I have never acquired the habit of walking about London with ten thousand pounds on my person. Rappington will take a squint at it to-day."

He did; and he came back to me, much excited, to talk about it.

" You know, Corwen, I never buy diamonds of that size for a lock-up."

" It won't be locked up long."

" One never knows. Can you sell it? "

" I'm nearly absolutely sure I can."

" Then buy it. I say, we sha'n't have many more dealings with that dear old lad. He's failing all along the line. He can't see properly, and he's much deafer. He blinked at me when I went in. And, when I spoke to him, I don't think he recognized my voice. Well, if you think you can sell it, that settles it. I'll ring him up now and tell him that the stone is ours."

He did.

NEXT day, about three, I went in Rappington's car to fetch the stone. I found the old man alone, as usual, but he seemed surprised to see me.

" Anything wrong? " he asked.

" Nothing. I've come to get it."

He seemed bewildered.

" To get—what, Mr. Corwen? I only sold you one stone this time."

" I know. I believe I can sell it within ten days. Let's have it."

He crumpled up in the most alarming fashion. I sprang to the bell, but he raised a thin, quivering hand.

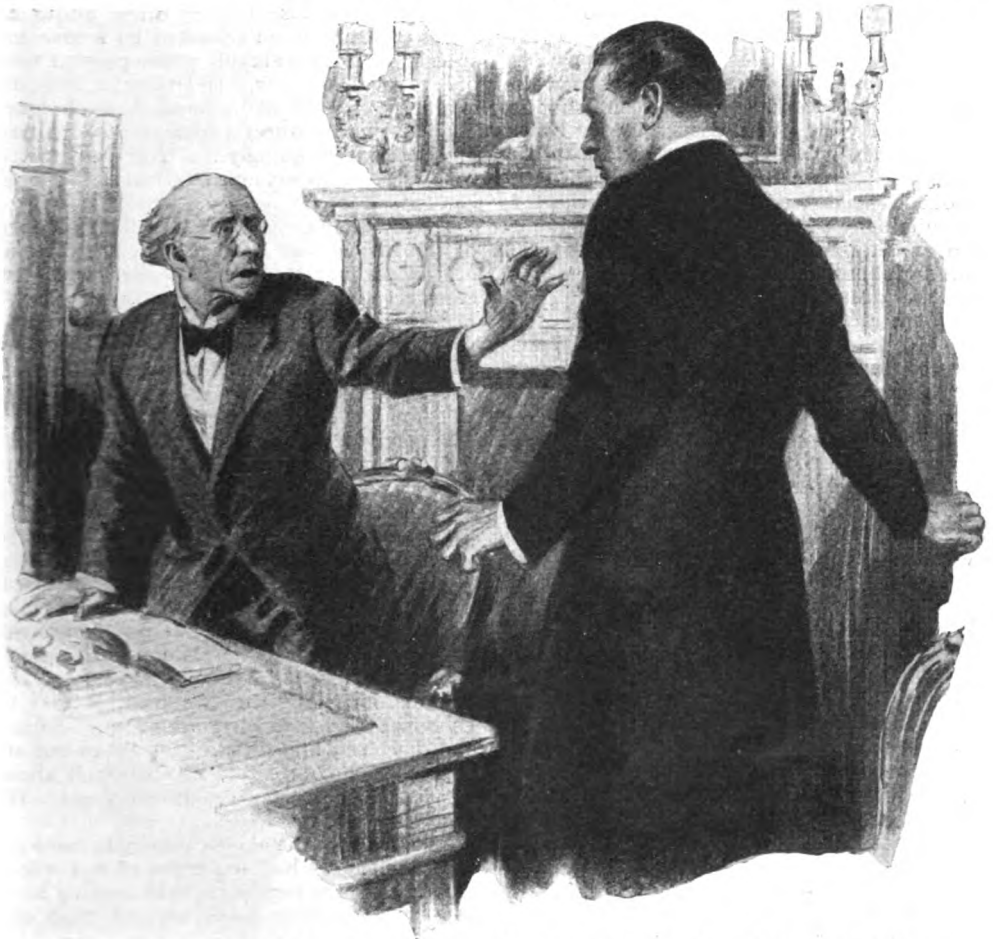
" No—no. Wait. Give—me—time. Ah, yes—I am too old, too old."

He was breathing heavily, gripping the arms of his chair. By sheer force of will he sat up, alert, almost rejuvenated. He spoke calmly, in his quiet customary accents.

" I gave you, Mr. Corwen, that diamond at five minutes past eleven this morning. You were announced, as my clerk will tell you; you were shown in; you asked for the diamond; I gave it to you; you took it away."

" Good God! But my clerks, half-a-dozen of them, will tell you that I was in my own room from ten to one."

" Somebody impersonated you. I—I could have sworn it was you. We have been robbed—robbed. I repeat, I am too old for this business."



I sprang to the bell, but he raised a thin, quivering hand. "No—no. Wait. Give—me—time. Ah, yes—I am too old, too old."

"Of course you insured it?"

"Against all losses during its transit from Amsterdam here. When it reached my strong-room, the insurance lapsed."

"May I see your clerk?"

This clerk, a sort of understudy of Ephraim, had been with him for five-and-twenty years at least, probably longer. He went the colour of skilly when he grasped what had happened. His story was the same as his master's. I had driven up that morning in a private car, asked to see Mr. Vandervell, was shown into his room, and came out of it five minutes later, driving off at once. He had not exchanged half-a-dozen sentences in all with me.

"You noticed nothing odd? Did this man speak with my voice?"

Unhappily the clerk, like his old master, was hard of hearing. He was expecting me to call. So far as he could remember he had done the little talking there was. He did think the man he mistook for me seemed to be pressed for time, but there was nothing odd about that.

The diamond of the year had been stolen.

II.

I RANG up Rappington and sent his car for him. After an exasperating delay we got hold of Charles Impey, whom I always think of as the Sherlock Holmes of to-day. He had helped us before on occasions which I may refer to presently. It is enough to say here that we could not have sent for a better or more discreet man. Alone with me, for Rappington had to hurry back to Bond Street, and both Ephraim and his clerk, as fountains of information, were soon drained dry, he summed up the situation:—

"We have to find a man who resembles, or did resemble, you. How did he hear of

this big diamond? How did he know that you had bought it and were likely to call for it?"

"I haven't the remotest idea how to answer your second question; the first is easy. Everybody who counts in our trade knew of this diamond. We heard of it, not through Ephraim, before the stone was cut. About half-a-dozen firms, not more, wanted it and might have bought it. We bought it over the telephone, but Rappington said nothing about my calling for it."

"You are sure of that?"

"Absolutely."

"The man who has stolen it would have the greatest difficulty in selling it?"

"Almost impossible for him to do so in London or Paris."

"Did you tell anybody that you were going to call for it to-day?"

"Not a soul—not even my wife."

"Have you approached any possible customer?"

"Not yet."

"M'm. You heard the questions I put to old Ephraim and his clerk. They are close as clams—always have been. This has knocked them out."

"You don't think we suspect *them?*"

"No—I don't, but that fellow Levinson or Lawson stole his own tiara."

I had told him about this experience and was amazed that he should have remembered it. Together we returned to Bond Street. It was after closing time, but we found Rappington impatiently awaiting us. I have no doubt that he was wondering as I was upon whom the loss would fall. Only a lawyer could decide that. We had bought the stone—verbally. But the goods had not been delivered. In justice to Rappington (and myself) I must add that, for the moment, this important matter had been pigeonholed. Our finder of needles in haystacks was invited to discover in or out of London a thief, bold beyond belief, clever and resourceful as they make them, who was so like me that he had been mistaken for me.

Impey, however, gleaned something from Rappington—not much. My partner belongs to a club which holds members of many facets. He had dined at this club the night before, and after dinner, in the smoking-room, he had said that we had secured a very notable diamond. Somebody—Rappington couldn't recall his name—had asked when the stone would be "on view." He thought, but wasn't sure, that half-a-dozen men might have heard his answer. The diamond would be "on view" to all and sundry who might present any reasonable claim to see it as soon as it passed into our possession. That, it seems, had provoked more talk, because two or three acquaintances of Rappington's wanted to know how such immensely valuable gems passed from one man to another. Did they travel, for example, by post or by special messenger? To these very natural questions my partner had replied, laughingly: "You had better ask Corwen; he attends to all that." Impey nodded.

He knew already, for I told him at once, of the incident in Hyde Park, of what my customers had said, and of my actual encounter with my double in Bond Street. My double could have found out my name, whereas I was in ignorance of his.

"We must find out his name, Mr. Corwen. Are you an actor?"

"Am I a sporting peer?"

He smiled, merely to humour me.

"You must impersonate *him*."

IT was done next day. I put myself unreservedly into Impey's hands; and he attended to everything. We spent an hour at a famous shop known to the theatrical world. The proprietor and Impey turned *me* out as a racing man, but not too handsomely. If any such gentleman had entered our establishment, I should have kept my eye on him. Together we took a taxi to Tattersall's—a *terra incognita* to me. Impey had disguised himself cleverly as an out-at-elbows groom. He told me to stroll about and wait till somebody accosted me. He would do the rest.

I passed into the equine precincts smoking a large cigar. I had suggested that I might chew a straw, a happy thought coming from me. Impey may have wished that the suggestion had occurred to him. Anyway, he shook his head. Certainly I was surprised to notice that nobody was chewing straws. I had supposed that it was almost impossible to bid for a horse convincingly unless you did so. However, I smoked my cigar leisurely and wandered about till I butted into a large, red-faced man wearing a waistcoat that must have been cut out of a horse-cloth. He said, rudely:—

"Upon my word—you've a nerve, 'aven't yer?"

I am not an actor, nor am I a pugilist. This large person's attitude was pugnacious. Still, knowing what was at stake, I prepared myself for anything, but I may have blinked at him.

"Never saw me before?" he jeered.

"I never want to see you again," I replied, mildly, I fear. "May I ask, sir, whom you take me to be?"

"One o' the biggest raskils unhung," he spluttered. "If I wasn't afraid o' dirtying me 'ands, I'd smash yer face in."

At this moment the blessed Impey came

Impey jerked my arm, saying: "You 'op it, governor. I'll 'ave a word with this gent."

to my rescue. He jerked my arm, saying in the Doric of the stables :—

"You 'op it, governor. I'll 'ave a word with this gent."

I retreated—according to plan. Before I reached the entrance, more than one man stared hard at me, but I strolled out, looking neither to right nor left. I found myself in Knightsbridge, where I stood still waiting for Impey. I waited a very long quarter of an hour, feeling that at any moment I might be assaulted by a passing stranger. Impey had been right over the selection of my kit. Perfectly turned out, I might have swaggered in and out of Tattersall's without being accosted.

To my great relief Impey appeared—alone.

"Follow me," he whispered.

I followed him to a tavern, where I ordered two pints of bitter and a sandwich.

"Make it three," said Impey, with a very "horsey" wink at a stout barman.

My pugnacious gentleman joined us, grinning broadly. He began handsomely enough by begging my pardon, which I granted. We withdrew to a snug corner table.

"You're the dead spit of 'im," he remarked, before he stuck his nose into the tankard. "Ere's how, mister."

I enjoyed that glass of bitter, for I guessed that Impey had made his first "cast," so to speak, in the right direction. I slaked a not disagreeable thirst and held my tongue.

Impey and our new friend talked together in hardly audible tones. Two "ports"—I never mix my drinks—were ordered and consumed. Then Impey and I returned to the theatrical costumier, and I was very glad to find myself once more in my frock-coat and pepper-and-salt trouserings.

I had seen Tattersall's, but had no wish to see it again.

III.

BETWEEN Tattersall's and Shaftesbury Avenue Impey told me the name of my double and what information he had gleaned concerning him. Briefly, it amounted to this: he called himself Captain Nason, but Impey doubted whether he had ever served His Majesty either as an officer or a gentleman. He was what is called to-day "a bit of a card." He had begun his sporting career as a *nagsman*, which is a word new to me. A "nagsman" is a rough-rider concerned with bitting and breaking valuable horses, teaching them manners and so forth. Captain Nason was, admittedly, a fine horseman. He had been, as a young man, a steeplechase jockey of the second or third class; he had raced in France and Belgium; he had lived by his wits, which served him well enough till he took to tippling and the pleasures of the table. When he became too heavy to ride, he trained horses, but not in England. Apparently he had never been warned off the Turf, although implicated in several dubious transactions. He had sunk rather low of recent years, but had kept outside the law.

Thus Impey. He concluded this biographical notice not too hopefully:—

"The fellow is as clever as he can stick, and at home anywhere and everywhere. Our friend, whom he robbed, had not seen him for six months. He hasn't the remotest notion where he lives or what he is doing. He impersonated you, but he must be mixed up with some gang of international crooks. He couldn't work such a tremendous theft on his own. That is certain. I must go at this in my own way. I expect to find him, but I shall have the surprise of my life if I recover that diamond."

Rappington and I agreed that he would not have the surprise of his life. To make matters worse, old Ephraim took to his bed. I fancy that his solicitor must have told him that he could never recover ten thousand pounds from us, simply because the goods had not been delivered to the purchaser. I felt so sick over the affair that I could have gone to bed myself and taken a rest-cure. Impey imposed upon both of us the strictest secrecy.

Three or four days passed before I saw Charles Impey again. When I did see him, he made me very nervous. In my less robust moments I dip now and again into stories written about crooks and detectives. I had followed the adventures of Sherlock Holmes with thrilling interest. I believed in the existence of Moriarty, a Napoleon of Crime. Perhaps I have more imagination than the ordinary man in the street. Beside my own hearth, in a cosy chair, I can see myself playing many heroic parts, but in a pea-soup fog in November, when I am groping my uncertain way down Piccadilly, I am sensible that I am dependent upon let us say, the nearest constable. And then I thank God that I am a well-to-do tradesman, heavily taxed, it is true, but protected by the forces of law and order.

Impey, so I thought, regarded me with a Puck-like eye.

"I've found Nason," he began. "Don't ask me, Mr. Corwen, why he is still at large. I could give you the names of a score of criminals who are known to and watched by the Yard. They are not arrested because the Yard is waiting for evidence, not merely presumptive, that would justify arrest and secure a verdict. I can find Nason, but where is the diamond? To find that I must ask for your valuable help and co-operation."

This was complimentary, but my apprehensions were pricked. How could I help Impey?

"I have seen Nason," he continued. "He is not wearing a sporting kit; and I don't think our red-faced man would recognize him if he met him. Still, the marked resemblance to you may serve us just as it served him. Will you impersonate him again?"

I wanted to exclaim with finality: "Certainly not." Those two words formed themselves upon my craven tongue, but, for some astonishing reason, I could not utter them. I told myself that this was none of my business; and yet I was hypnotized by Impey's eyes, whirled out of myself into a new and exciting world, his world, where he carried his life in his hand as carelessly as I carry my umbrella!

"If—if it is n-n-necessary," I stammered.

"I think it is a sporting chance. I shall have to dress you up in some clothes I shall provide; I shall have to take liberties with your hair and complexion; and then I want to accompany you to a restaurant in Holborn that you have never been into, where you will order and eat your dinner."

"If I can."

"*If you can.* The cooking there is Spanish. The clients are mostly gentlemen from Central and South America. You will dine alone——"

"Good Lord!"

" But I shall be at the table next to you. Then we shall see what happens."

" You've said too much or too little. What is likely to happen ? "

" I think it is barely possible you may be handed the diamond."

I experienced a violent palpitation of the heart. I had a vision of myself seated at table, surrounded by cut-throats, and I beheld at another table my wife and our three children doomed to witness my sudden and painful death. Impey was paid, *underpaid*, to run such harrowing risks. But again, as if I were a dual personality, some reckless person who was not Alfred Corwen said with comparative calmness :—

" Why should I be handed the diamond ? "

" Because one of the big steamers is sailing to-morrow from Southampton to Buenos Aires, and Nason, under another name, has booked his passage. He is dining to-night at this restaurant, unless you take his place. If you consent to take his place, it will will be my business to see that he is unpunctual. To find all this out has taken time and money, *not your money*. Mr. Vandervell has been very generous, but really this is a matter of life and death to him. If that diamond is not handed to you, he will die of disappointment."

" And if it is handed to me ? "

" You will finish your dinner quietly, and stroll out of the restaurant carrying the diamond in your waistcoat-pocket. Half an hour later, perhaps, you will have the pleasure of showing it to Mr. Vandervell."

" And the weak link in this chain of reasoning ? Where is that ? "

" Ah, the weak link is always somewhere, and if I could put my finger on it, Mr. Corwen, it might cease to be weak. Three persons are in this, and they may or may not trust each other. Honour is only to be found among thieves when it is inspired by self-interest. Any man impersonating you successfully would have to get rid of the diamond temporarily and then try to make himself look as unlike you as possible. Nason knows the Argentine. He discovered that the stone belonged to Vandervell and that it would be offered to you. He devised a bold scheme to get possession of it. Now he has to sell it. I hate trying to be wise before the event. I may have been mistaken, misled. We shall see."

IV.

I GOT no more out of him till after the event. I suppose that the art of " make-up " has to be mastered by these private investigators, but I was not quite prepared for the *expertise* displayed by Impey on me. The clothes he provided might have belonged to any bagman who was not in too easy circumstances ; he stained my face and hands with some yellowish liquid that made me look liverish and haggard ; he silvered my hair at the temples and brushed it back from my forehead ; he provided me with horn-rimmed spectacles holding darkened lenses. If what I saw in a very unflattering looking-glass bore any marked resemblance to Nason, I can only say that he had ceased to bear any resemblance to me. Satisfied with what he had done with me, he turned his attention to himself. Like that arch-criminal Peace, he disdained wigs and all artificial hair. He had a sort of indiarubber skin and features which he could distort. When he had finished his toilet, I should have taken him to be an ugly specimen of the Indo-Latin race, and more Indian than Spanish. We made a pretty pair.

I shall not mention the name of the restaurant, because it is still in existence. As we entered I smelt garlic and patchouli, which do not blend happily together. The company was as mixed as the smell, men and women sitting together at small tables, laughing, chattering, gesturing, and eating like savages. I sat down and ordered a fried sole and some roast chicken, to be washed down with a pint of rough Burgundy. I saw Impey slouch in and sit near me. Nobody looked at us. Impey rolled a cigarette and lighted it. Then he lay back in his chair, inhaling the smoke and half-closing his eyes.

My sole was served, and I might have eaten it if my appetite had not failed me. As I trifled with it, I noticed that a woman was furtively glancing at me. Then she murmured something to her companion, who nodded. These two were a cut above the others, better dressed and with better table manners. By her plate she had a small handbag. I wondered whether the diamond might be in that.

I attacked my chicken with better appetite. The restaurant was a gay little place, cheap, common, but not a stone's throw from a roaring thoroughfare. The proprietor seemed to be on genial terms with many of his customers, a reassuring sign. He came to my table and asked me if my chicken was to my liking. I said that it was, adding that the wine at a modest price was good. He beamed at me and moved away. I was terrified that he might address me, taking me to be Nason, but evidently he regarded me as a stranger. He paid no attention to Impey, who was devouring a dangerous-looking dish of stuffed chillies.

I began to think that nothing would happen. I ordered some black coffee and a glass of Benedictine. The coffee was quite good. At this moment the woman opened her handbag and took from it a fat cigarette

case. She put a cigarette between her lips, stood up, and sauntered towards me.

"Will the Señor spare me one of his matches?"

I took a match, struck it, and held it for her, not rising. She bent down, lighted her cigarette, smiled, and sauntered back to her chair. Close to my cup of coffee, on the not too clean cloth, was a small object twisted up in white tissue paper. I let my hand rest on it for a moment or two, long enough to make reasonably sure that some hard, sharp stone was concealed by the paper. Then I transferred it to my waistcoat-pocket. I lit a small cigar, sipped my Benedictine, and had the pleasure of seeing the woman and her companion leave the restaurant. Mindful of Impey's admonitions, I was in no hurry to follow them. I called for my bill and settled it. The tip I left on the plate so pleased my greasy little waiter that I feared he meant to embrace me.

A man hurried into the restaurant and fell breathlessly into a chair.

He was my "double"!

V.

HE had not seen me yet. I crammed on my hat and pulled it down over my eyes. Nason—or whatever he called nimself—stared about him, obviously looking for the couple that had gone out. Had he been five minutes earlier he would have found them. He summoned my waiter, who shrugged his shoulders and gesticulated, pointing to the table where the lady with the handbag had sat and then to the door. To my horror, he indicated *me!* Being badly rattled, it didn't occur to me that the waiter was confounded at finding two customers so very alike. Nason dismissed the waiter, crossed to my table, sat down opposite to me, and said in a low, savage voice:—

"Who the devil are you?"

Impey answered the question. As he was behind me I couldn't see him approach. His voice, coming from a man who might have been a Gaucho from the Argentine pampas, startled Nason.

"You two gentlemen don't know each other. Mr. Corwen—Captain Nason. But it isn't easy, as that waiter found out, to tell t'other from which—is it?"

Nason stared at him in stupefaction. Impey went on with his imperturbable drawl:—

"If the Corsican brothers will be good enough to follow me quietly out of this noisy hash-house, I will take them to a quieter place, where we shall be more at our ease. If Captain Nason is wise, he will do exactly what I say."

"I've been sold," said Nason, thickly.

"You have, Captain. 'Pawned' is the better word, but the pledge may be redeemed."

Nason stood up; so did I, as Impey added, soothingly:—

"Your friends, Captain, have come and gone, but, if it is any comfort to you, they haven't gone far."

"Damn you," growled Nason; "you hold the cards."

"Not all of them yet, but enough to beat your lone hand."

I was the first to pass out of the restaurant. Nason and Impey followed me.

Impey hailed a passing taxi and we got into it. Nason collapsed into a corner. I guessed that he was paralysed by surprise and disappointment. Impey had been too much for him. He had been too much for me; but the feel of the hard object in my waistcoat-pocket heartened me up. I said nothing, having nothing to say that might be deemed appropriate.

Ten minutes later we were in Impey's rooms, where I had left myself, so to speak. I was glad to see my frock-coat again.

"In exchange for your pistol, Captain," said Impey, pleasantly, "I will give you what you need far more—a stiff whisky-and-soda."

Without a word, Nason laid an automatic on the table. I believe that Impey had hypnotized him just as he had hypnotized me. Nason gulped down his drink. I swallowed a less stiff dose, wondering what would happen next. Impey has a sense of the dramatic which would appeal to me more if it were not exercised at my expense. He had startled Nason into obedience and impotence. I had to admit that. What followed startled me into precisely the same condition.

"You went to that restaurant, Captain, to receive from a certain woman a stone done up in paper. Mr. Corwen will now return to you something which, humanly speaking, has saved your life."

He made a sign to me. Obedience preceded impotence. I took from my pocket, with extreme reluctance, what was twisted up in paper and handed it to Nason.

"Do you claim that as yours?" asked Impey.

Nason tore off the paper and saw—a small lump of sugar, whittled down by file or penknife into the shape of the big diamond. Nason, at the end of his tether mentally and physically, let the lump fall to the carpet, where it lay unheeded.

I gripped the arms of my chair. Impey glanced at his watch.

"She ought to be here soon," he observed, pleasantly, "but Woman, at her best or worst, is a creature of surprises.

Some have as many facets as a brilliant. Sixty-four is the number, isn't it, Mr. Corwen ? "

I nodded.

" You were sold, Captain, by a woman whom I have bought with Mr. Vandervell's money. His pride, his horror of publicity and perhaps ridicule, have saved you and two others from a criminal prosecution. Your friends in South America may help you to earn an honest living if——"

" If—— ? "

" If this lady keeps her appointment with me. If she doesn't, my old colleagues at the Yard will take over this interesting case. I work within the Metropolitan area ; the Yard, as you know, stretches its tentacles to the uttermost ends of the earth."

Really Impey's vocabulary is amazing, but, like myself, he is self-educated and a lover of sound literature. Nason's wits, sharpened on race-courses, quickened before mine did.

" If you bought her," he said, bitterly, " why in Hell couldn't she hand the cursed diamond to you and have done with it ? "

" Because she values her life, which at this moment is gravely imperilled. That is why I am getting uneasy about her. I bought her, it is true, but what we may call the thirty pieces of silver have not yet been paid. Suspend final judgment of her till you meet her."

VI.

WE waited—in intolerable suspense. Pity for Nason percolated through my tissues. I felt that the loss of the diamond distressed him less than the loss of this woman whom he had trusted. *She had kissed him and sold him !* I tried to recall her face and voice, but I was too bewildered ; and in the presence of Nason I had to refrain from asking Impey questions, the more so because I divined an ever-increasing nervousness beneath his impassive exterior. What puzzled me, I remember, more than anything else was the fact that she had mistaken me for Nason, whom she knew so intimately. We were strangely alike at a short distance, but her face had been within six inches of mine when she lighted her cigarette.

We heard the sharp tinkle of a bell. Impey jumped up.

" If this is she," he said to Nason, " sit still and say nothing till I have dealt with her."

He hurried from the room, opened the door of his flat, and came back accompanied by the woman. I saw her great dark eyes blazing out of her white face ; she looked to me a quivering mass of excitement as Impey closed the door and confronted her. But she stole a swift glance, impossible to interpret, at Nason, whose eyes were on the carpet.

" Have you told him ? " she asked.

" Not yet. Have you the diamond ? "

" *Dios !* The diamond ! You only think of that. But what I have suffered, bah, that is nothing to you—nothing at all. Yes ; I have the diamond. Take it."

She fumbled with her handbag, glaring at Impey, furious with him, primitively savage. He took the stone from her, glanced at it, and handed it to me.

" Is that the right article ? "

It was. It lay in my hand—this great stone which I had never expected to see again. In a sort of dream I heard Impey's voice :—

" Here is your money. Count the notes."

" Blood money," said Nason.

She counted the notes and thrust them into the bag, flinging that upon the table as she turned to Nason.

" Aye ! Blood money, *querido*, your blood. I have done this to save you. Pedro Ortega meant to kill you—and me. I knew that ; I knew him—and you. Always you are so reckless and too clever, but I adore your cleverness. And I am clever too. *Santisima Madonna !* A woman has to be clever when she loves. Yes, I betrayed you to this man to save your life. It was the only way. He —he make that plain to me. We—you and I—have a thousand pounds. We sail to-morrow to my own country. We begin again, no ? Now do you understand what I have done for you ? "

He did. He had her in his arms, kissing her fiercely, and Impey and I turned our backs on them. A minute later Impey took them into his small dining-room and left them there.

" I SHALL keep them here to-night," he said to me, " and I shall see them safe on board to-morrow. Ortega has been arrested on another charge. *He* is the villain of the play. Nason is not such a bad fellow. He stole that diamond for *her*. She is his wife. She has stuck to him through thick and thin. He met her first when he was racing or buying polo ponies in the Argentine. Ortega, who knew both of them, persuaded Nason to impersonate you. Nason had told him that you were his " double." Ortega deals in diamonds. You see, Mr. Corwen, in this case I happened to know you and old Ephraim and his clerk. I put you three out of my court of inquiry at once. The old man implored me not to go to the Yard. He would sooner have lost the diamond. He blamed himself and his failing powers ; his old clerk was beside himself with misery. It was clear that your " double " had

" Yes, I betrayed you to this man to save your life. It was the only way."

impersonated you. I persuaded you to impersonate him. That morning at Tatt's revealed Nason's name and habits. I had to find him, a comparatively easy job. When I found him, he was with his wife and Ortega. The Yard *wanted* Ortega. He knew that. I thought first of getting at him. Luckily I got at the woman instead. Luckily, too, she loved Nason and hated and feared the other fellow. She had possession of the diamond. Nason trusted her with it. He knew that he might be arrested and searched. His wife separated from him. All three booked passages to Buenos Aires.

"My problem was to get hold of the diamond quietly. I was dealing with two Latins. Ortega is capable of anything. The Yard till yesterday hadn't the evidence that would justify his arrest. At the last moment it occurred to me that Mrs. Nason might throw dust in the eyes of Ortega if she offered to play a cruel trick on her husband. He fell for that, as I was almost sure he would. She had to pretend that she loved the beast. She promised to bolt with Ortega, leaving Nason with a lump of sugar. She told Nason to come to the restaurant at an hour suggested by me. She had to cajole and fool two men, no easy job. I touch my cap to her. I arranged that Ortega should be arrested after he left the restaurant, but the long delay worried me horribly. That's about all."

Mrs. Nason explained the delay. Ortega, on leaving the restaurant, had insisted on seeing the diamond. He had stood at a quiet corner, thereby upsetting Impey's plans, because it was understood that the man was to be arrested some distance from the restaurant, between that and a music-hall where Mrs. Nason proposed to spend the evening. Ortega, however, wanted to get possession of the diamond *and the woman*. Had he suspected treachery, he would have slipped a knife into her. She showed him the diamond, but refused to give it up, saying that it was safer in her keeping. They had argued about this for nearly half an hour.

WHEN I saw old Ephraim, next day, I said to him :—

"I don't understand, Mr. Vandervell, why the loss of this stone affected you so terribly."

"Impey did not tell you ?"

"No."

"He is a good fellow. Mr. Corwen, it was I—I who chattered like a foolish girl. That man, Ortega, came to me ; he pestered me to sell the stone to him. I have bought diamonds from him, but never have I sold him a stone. To get rid of him I told him that I had sold the stone to you ; I told him that he could buy it from you, and when he asked if the diamond was already in your possession I told him that it would be in less than twenty-four hours. To be such a fool—at my age ! I am punished for my folly. This is the first time I have sold a big stone and made a heavy loss over it. Don't tell this story about me till I am dead."

He lived to the ripe age of eighty-six and did business to the last. Each year, at Christmas-time, I get a card of good wishes from Mrs. Nason, and with it a small lump of sugar.

(Next month : "Mrs. Pengarvis.")

"THE MARACOT DEEP"

A Thrilling New Adventure Serial

by

A. CONAN DOYLE

See page 247.

HOW WE HOLD THINGS

By CLAUDE F. LUKE

II.—TEA-CUPS AND CIGARETTES.

A FRIEND who had read my recent article in THE STRAND MAGAZINE concerning the varieties of grip adopted by writers and artists for the manipulation of their pens and brushes raised an interesting point. We were at a fashionable gathering where a number of women of the type whose lives have been described as "just one pictorial paper after another" were busily engaged in tea and gossip. With a sweep of his arm that embraced the company, my companion said :—

"Have you noticed the little mannerisms of women at these affairs ; the diverse ways they have of holding the simplest objects ? Look around you now. There are, for example, scarcely two women holding their cups alike." And later, when cigarettes were produced, he returned to the subject by adding that the habit of smoking among women, though of comparatively recent origin, had already become a definite part of a woman's deportment. The nice conduct of a cigarette was as much a social asset to the modern woman as the dainty manipulation of a fan was to her grandmother, and the slender white cylinders in the hands of a graceful woman make as powerful a contribution to her fascinating armoury !

MISS ISABEL JEANS.
Photo : Janet Jevons.

MISS TALLULAH BANKHEAD.

With these tentative observations in mind, I embarked forthwith upon a curious mission, that of discovering how women perform these acts.

"But surely," exclaimed Miss Isabel Jeans, on whom I opened the attack, "everyone does these things alike. I am certain I have none of

the characteristic touches you hope to find."

Nevertheless, when I asked her to adopt her normal pose for taking tea, and pointed out to her that she held her cup in the left hand, she said: "Good gracious, so I do! I never noticed that before!"

Gloating slightly, I preserved a modest front.

"Now you mention it, I *am* left-handed in small things, though I write and do most things with my right hand." And afterwards it was in the right hand that she held a cigarette. Except that she grasps the holder at its extreme tip, there was nothing of note in this accomplishment. But that may have been because she smokes very

little, I decided, and straightway sought out Miss Tallulah Bankhead, than whom there are few more determined adventurers in this twentieth-century art. Her dressing-room bespeaks her habit. The atmosphere is charged with the ghosts of departed whiffs!

"I suppose I smoke too much," she confessed with that fine huskiness that is intoxication to the vast company of "Tallulah fans." "Unconsciously I light at least thirty a day. But I do not smoke them all. Before one is half consumed I throw it away—and light another! Nerves, I suppose. It's worse when I am learning a new part. A fresh *rôle* always means a leap in my cigarette bill. But, as I have said, it is the first breaths that I enjoy; I rarely smoke the near half of the cigarette at all.

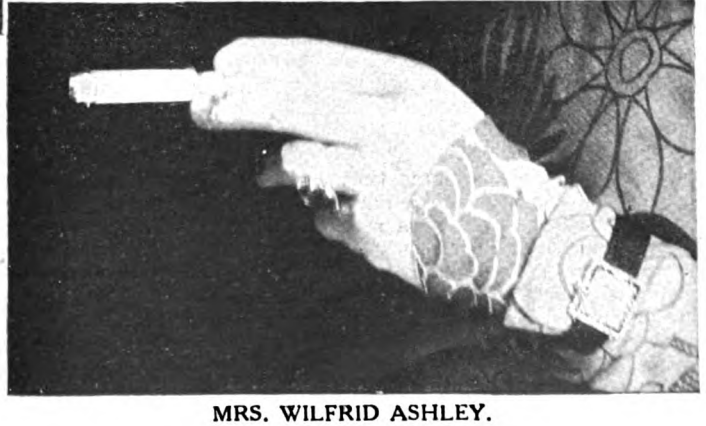
"Do I use a holder? I do *not*. And I avoid staining my fingers by the simple expedient of holding the lighted end of the cigarette uppermost. Again, I always grip the end lightly; a firm grip squeezes out the stain. My pet abomination is the woman who opens her case, produces a cigarette, and proceeds to tap a sharp tattoo on the case itself or on her thumbnail. I believe this brisk tapping is said to signify an alert and efficient mind. If so, thank Heaven I am scatter-brained!

"There is another irritating habit a number of women possess. They take hold of a cup of tea as though it were white hot: just thumb and forefinger—so. Then they carefully waggle their little finger till it all but sticks in their neighbour's eye!"

Here Miss Bankhead gave a humorous impression of this very common tea-cup comedy. The tea-shops are full of the "little finger wagglers"!

"This is the 'refeened' school, I believe," went on the actress. "Personally I am not a bit 'refeened.' As you notice, I hold my cup as God meant me to—with a firm grip and no waggling!"

So far, so good, I thought. A bright idea that, about holding the cigarette upwards to avoid finger stain. Childishly simple, of course, but how many men have thought of it? Mrs. Wilfrid Ashley agreed.



MRS. WILFRID ASHLEY.

" Miss Bankhead is perfectly right," she said. " Although I use a holder, the lighted end is always tilted upwards, with the result that, though I smoke a good deal, my fingers are never stained. Men would do well to cultivate this method, though, indeed, finger stains seem less objectionable on a man than on a woman."

CATHARINE COUNTESS OF WESTMORLAND.

Relieved, I drew my own discoloured digits from behind me, and for the first time took stock of Mrs. Ashley's beautiful shapely hands.

" I have seen someone," I remarked, " with hands remarkably like your own. Your expressive gestures, and that thrust of the finger to enforce a remark, are distinctly familiar."

" That would probably be Miss Madge Titheradge," exclaimed Mrs. Ashley, promptly, and I agreed. " It is quite a well-known double. Some time ago three different people sent me a page from *The Tatler*, on which appeared a photograph of Miss Titheradge's hands, which they said resembled mine."

Mrs. Ashley is keenly interested in hands. She accomplishes so much by their means. If there is a " manual complex " in the psychologists' creed, no doubt Mrs. Ashley has it. She can do most things with her hands, whether it is playing a salmon, trimming a hat, wielding a hammer, or composing a decorative design in the Poiret manner of piecing together odd bits of coloured material.

" People without an acute sense of feeling in their finger-tips can do none of these things well," she continued. " The simple act of arranging a bowl of flowers is beyond some women because they lack expression in their fingers."

Returning to the question of tea-cups, Mrs. Ashley confessed that she cannot be counted an expert, as she never takes tea, but she dislikes intensely the American habit of hugging a cup as though it were a " winter warmer." In the photograph she is holding a coffee-cup, part of a valuable service, which, she declared, is the earliest object she can remember.

Catharine Countess of Westmorland was not quite in agreement with Mrs. Ashley and Miss Bankhead.

" If one is near another guest," she said, " a cigarette held vertically might conceivably jab one's neighbour ; such at least is my experience."

Like Miss Bankhead, however, the Countess hates the " little finger wagglers," and shared with Miss Jeans the surprise when I discovered for her that, though right-handed in most things, she held both tea-cup and cigarette in the left hand. She hates to see the increasing number of young girls who talk to you with cigarettes lolling from their lips.

MRS. McGRATH
(Rosita Forbes).

If you should ever find yourself in company with that charming and talented lady, Mrs. McGrath, better known perhaps as Rosita Forbes, the famous writer and explorer, it would repay you to risk a breach of manners and study her shapely hands with more than passing interest. They are fine, white, and tapering, not at all the hands one would expect to find on a lady of Mrs. McGrath's rather masculine accomplishments. But it is in their history rather than their beauty that their chief interest lies.

I noticed that in the act of lifting her cup her right hand trembled; it is blurred in the photograph. On inquiry I learned that the second and third fingers were dislocated when a camel ran away with Mrs. McGrath astride. By straining at the reins, which were wound about her middle fingers, she managed to check the runaway, and only then became aware of the curious shape of the fingers. The Libyan desert is not a popular centre for manipulative surgeons, and so Mrs. McGrath did nothing in the matter. This policy of *laissez-faire* was successful, for the fingers are now practically normal except for two slight swellings on the knuckles.

The little finger on the same hand bears evidence of another experience. While in the desert Mrs. McGrath's party came upon a native boy with a broken collar-bone. He was much exhausted and food was the first necessity. Hastily opening a tin of meat, Mrs. McGrath slipped, crashing her hand against the tin with her little finger jammed beneath. The permanent crook at the first joint is the result.

Yet, while the right hand bears the marks of her intrepid exploits, the left is singularly unscarred and beautiful, and has twice been used by artists as a model for the sinister hand of Lucretia Borgia! At one time Mrs. McGrath smoked forty cigarettes a day. Then, for a bet, she abstained entirely for a whole year, and now her consumption is considerably reduced.

It is interesting to compare and contrast the two

MISS EVELYN LAYE.

photographs of Miss Evelyn Laye and Miss Edith Day. Both manage very gracefully to hold a tea-cup and cigarette simultaneously, but while Miss Laye grasps the cup in her left hand and the saucer and cigarette in her right, Miss Day has the cup and cigarette in her right hand and the saucer in her left. Miss Day smokes only five cigarettes a day; is devoted to mild Virginian tobacco; and rarely touches a cigarette before tea-time. Miss Laye is also a moderate smoker, though her afternoon cup of tea and cigarette she regards as a pick-me-up of the first order. She detests the type of woman who makes a conscious effort of toying with a cigarette as heartily as she dislikes what she terms "the feminine chimney-pot" or chain-smoker. Miss Laye has a knack of resting her saucer on her knee, and glancing at you over her poised cup, that

MISS GWEN FFRANGCON-DAVIES.

is mightily disturbing to susceptible interviewers!

It is good fun to take tea with Miss Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies. The natural play of her beautiful hands is as delightful as anything she did with them in "The Immortal Hour." If you talk interestingly enough she will possibly indulge in an amusing trick which she confesses is not one of her "party manners"; that is, while she listens, to rest the cup absently *against her forehead!*

"I frequently do that when I am really interested in a person's conversation," she said with a smile; "there is something soothing in the feel of the smooth warm cup that helps concentration."

I doubt if there is a less expert smoker in the world than Miss Davies. She frankly admits that she smokes merely for the sake of being sociable. In her grasp a cigarette plays all manner of tricks. It drops from her hand, sends its smoke into her eyes, and clearly shows that it is in unaccustomed fingers. The picture showing her reading a book and smoking betrays the adage that the camera cannot lie. It has, in this instance, lied most blatantly, for to combine the business of reading with that of manipulating a cigarette is quite beyond this charming lady's powers!

Miss Muriel Barnby, daughter of the late Sir Joseph Barnby, the famous composer, has a curious tea-table fad. For as long as she can remember she

MISS EDITH DAY.

has dispensed with the handle of her tea-cup, preferring to couch the cup between her thumb and finger-tips.

"I think," she told me, "it began with a very small and rebellious girl in revolt against the asininity of adults. It seemed to my tender intelligence an idiotic demand to make of a very little girl to expect her to hold a wide and weighty coffee-cup by a slender handle without spilling the liquid. My 'finger-tip' grip seemed much more sensible, and despite occasional burnt fingers and sundry comments from my great-aunt, who never allowed a meal to pass without the inevitable 'Now, Muriel—sit up and make a pretty hand,' I stubbornly persevered."

MISS MURIEL BARNBY.

Miss Barnby is a resolute non-smoker, and she thinks many dark things about certain types of men and women who lack refinement in their wooing of My Lady Nicotine. Especially does she dislike the person who leaves the stub of a cigarette smouldering in an ash-tray; and she is only slightly less averse to the smoker who occupies the front seat on top of an omnibus! I think that Miss Barnby's abstemious views are partially inherited. I have heard her tell the story of how Lady Barnby once decided to initiate herself into the mysteries of smoking. For an afternoon she kept to her room and emerged at dinner-time slightly flushed, obviously defeated, and with a burned lip!

THE HON. MRS. FITZROY-STEWART.

Another non-smoker is the Hon. Mrs. Fitzroy-Stewart, who, however, deplores many of the mannerisms of smokers, particularly the habit of rolling a cigarette between the lips to moisten the end.

"Dining-out is no longer the æsthetic pleasure it once was," she said. "A surprising number of people have never studied the art of being *tidy* at meals. I like to see food and drink taken cleanly, and have no patience with the person who, through sheer thoughtlessness, slops his tea, or distributes crumbs impartially in his own and his neighbour's laps. A cup should be held so that small portions of the liquid can be absorbed daintily. Then there would be no slopping, and that irritating habit of scraping the cup across the saucer's edge before raising it to the lips would be unnecessary.

"My mother used to tell me of how girls were instructed in such things. That was in the days when back-boards were employed to give a girl an erect carriage. A little of this kind of education would be no bad thing to-day."

Which, after all, is only a 1927 version of the message of Clement of Alexandria, that fine old Greek, who, somewhere about A.D. 200, wrote the following:—

"Christians ought to be careful not to drink with contorted faces, not to grasp the cup too eagerly, not to roll their eyes indecently before drinking, not to drain the cup at a draught intemperately, not to splash their chins nor drench their garments while gulping down the liquor, their faces fairly filling the bowls, and being nearly drowned in them."

And that, I think, is that.

Police Protection

By

LYNN DOYLE

Illustrated by
TOM COTTRELL

I WAS walking down Ballygullion Street, said Mr. Patrick Murphy, when I got a hail from old Dr. Dickson, that was standing on his own doorstep.

"What is it, doctor?" sez I, going over to him.

"The rector an' his wife an' one or two more is comin' in on Tuesday to dinner," sez he. "Has Mrs. Murphy a pair of chickens or a pair of ducks ready for killing?"

"She has a pair of fine chickens, doctor," sez I, "but divil a duck kind at the minit."

I hadn't the words out of my mouth till I knowed I had made a mistake. The doctor was a hearty old fellow, fond of a glass an' a joke, especially if it was at somebody else's expense; but he was as thrawn as a dog's hind leg.

"I'd rather have ducks," sez he.

"H'm!" sez I to myself. "An' if I'd said ducks you'd ha' let the rector turn Roman sooner nor let him put a tooth in anything but chickens. Are none of your own ready?" sez I out loud. "You had a pair near fit for the table last week."

"They're hardly just fit yet," sez he, shaking his head; "an' seeing that the rector is a teetotaller a body'd like to give him something decent to eat, anyway. Tell me, Pat," sez he, taking a cautious look round, "I seen Big Billy Lenahan of the Hills going down the street a while ago. Do you think he'd poach a pair of wild ducks for me? Major Donaldson's marshes is fair hiving with ducks this minit."

"Oh, deed would he," sez I. "The same boy would poach angels if he could get a big enough size of shot, an' thought the divil would find him a market for them."

"Will you ask him, Pat?" sez the doctor. "You needn't say they're for me."

"I needn't," sez I, "but I will. If the worst comes to the worst, an' Billy is caught, you're the police doctor, an' can poison the sergeant before Petty Sessions day."

"Go 'long, then," sez the doctor. "Tell him they're for me if you like; though he's a dangerous ruffian to tell anything to. Tell him, anyway, that he must have them here this evening."

So I went an' found Billy, an' he was as pleased as Punch. The same lad would sooner make a couple of bob by roguery than plough up gold.

"An' see that they're fat, Billy," sez I, "or the doctor's wife'll give you next to nothing for them. You know what she is. An' she's not just stuck for a pair; for she has two of her own in the back-yard, near fit to kill."

"Has she?" sez Billy. "Let her eat them, then. If I went on shooting ducks till I got a pair would satisfy her, Major Donaldson would think the war had broke out again. Anyhow," sez he, "how am I to sell two cattle for my uncle, an' then get to the marshes an' back before dusk?"

"You won't take on the job, then?"

"I don't think it," sez Billy, considering. Then his face cleared. "Wait," sez he. "Dammit, I will. Sure you might say I'll be doing it under police protection, with ould Dickson the Constabulary doctor, an'

able to give them a dose any time would open a pair of handcuffs. And I'll make sure to give the ducks to the doctor himself. Good-bye, now, Pat. I'm too busy a man to be standin' here blethering to a loafer like you."

An' away he goes down the road, all fat an' rascality.

Sure enough he turned up at the doctor's house before dusk with the ducks in a parcel, ready for the table an' all. But it was the doctor's wife the maid brought to the door.

"Here's the ducks the doctor ordered, mem," sez Billy.

"He never told me he ordered ducks," sez she, very sharp. "I don't know that I want them. What are you charging for them?"

Billy took a hard look at her.

"Five shillings," sez he. "An' I'm to get a glass of whisky to wet the bargain."

"Five grandmothers," sez the doctor's wife. "You'd think it was turkeys you were selling. Four-and-sixpence, or take them with you. They're poor, half-starved-lookin' things."

"I couldn't very well feel their breasts, an' them fifty yards up in the air," sez Billy. "But four-an'-sixpence be it. You'll give me the glass of whisky as well."

"There's a two-shilling-bit an' a half-crown," sez the doctor's wife. "If you want anything else you can go to the dispensary for it."

"You're a hard woman," sez Billy, turning away. "But, mind you, the doctor won't be too well-pleased when he comes home."

An' when the doctor came home he wasn't well-pleased at all.

"Did Big Billy Lenahan leave in the ducks?" sez he.

"He did," sez she. "What did you agree to give him for them?"

"Five shillings," sez the doctor. "I think it was cheap."

"Did you say anything about a glass of whisky?" sez his wife.

"Not a word," sez the doctor.

"Oh, well, he got none," sez his wife. "An' I beat him down to four-an'-sixpence; that's cheaper still."

"You what?" sez the doctor.

"I beat him down to four shillings an' sixpence," sez the doctor's wife. "Now, you needn't be getting red in the face. It was plenty for him."

"Plenty hell," sez the doctor, rushing to the hall-door. "I paid him five shillings up the street. The scoundrel," sez he, fumbling at the latch lock, "the blackguard, the swindler! Nine-an'-sixpence for two ducks; an' I'll be laughed at all over the town. Which way did he go? Begad, there he is, coming out of Larney's pub. Curse this gout. Wait, there's Pat Murphy. Hi, Pat, Pat! Run after Big Billy Lenahan, an' tell him to come back."

So I up the road after Billy, but though I called out after him all ways I couldn't get him stopped till he was well round the corner, walking a deal faster nor I'd ever seen him walk before.

"Is it training for a jockey you are," sez I, "ye big elephant, ye? Didn't you hear me calling? The doctor wants you."

"Did he say what for?" sez Billy.

"No," sez I, "he did not. Come back on the flats of your feet an' find out, since you are in training."

"I can't," sez Billy. "I couldn't get my uncle's two heifers off my hands before

"Hi, Pat, Pat! Run after Big Billy Lenahan, an' tell him to come back."

I went for the ducks, an' now my only chance of selling them is to get hold of Jim Taylor, the cattle-dealer, before he leaves the town. What could the doctor be wanting with me, I wonder? I gave him his ducks. Hold on," sez he, feeling in his pockets. "By this an' by that he forgot to pay me!"

"Death's not far off you, Billy," sez I, "when you're beginning to poach for pure love of your fellow-creatures. If it was anybody but yourself I'd say your brain was going."

"Is it any wonder it would go," sez Billy, "an' me near astray in the head, tryin' to poach ducks an' sell cattle the same afternoon? Here, Pat, do you pay me, an' collect it off the doctor. Five shillings for the two ducks."

"Are you sure it's five?" sez I. For I had met Billy a wheen of times before.

"Five shillings an' a glass of whisky," sez Billy. "Wait, I'll go back myself. I was forgetting about the whisky."

"There's the five shillings," sez I, handing them over. "A glass of whisky's little enough for my trouble an' the run I've had."

An' I went back to the doctor's, chuckling to myself at the way I'd got the better of Billy, for once.

But when I got back to the doctor's I think he'd have had apoplexy only that he wouldn't get a fee for attendin' himself. He'd been a bit calmed down before I turned up, but the fresh bit of roguery set him off wilder than ever. Even in his rage, though, he wouldn't let me suffer, an' threw me two half-crowns an' told me to go an' pay my fees in the Infant School. But vengeance on Billy he would have; an' partly with the wife egging him on, an' partly with her exasperating him by reminding him that, anyway, she had only thrown away four-an'-sixpence, he lost his head altogether an' away off to the barracks to swear an information against Billy.

All I could say I wasn't able to stop him, an' the best I could think of then was to go off an' hunt up Billy, an' tell him to make restitution before there was a warrant issued for his arrest. But I wasn't trying half as hard to find Billy as he was trying to avoid me; so in the end I gave it up as a bad job, an' went off to finish my marketing.

IN the meantime the doctor was having his own tribulations. As soon as Big Billy's name was mentioned the sergeant reached for a charge sheet and called out for the orderly to bring a pen. Sooner or later all the Ballygullion sergeants began to look to Big Billy Lenahan as a source of promotion, either through poachin' or poteen; an' though none of them ever made much of it, still they never gave up hope.

But after a little the sergeant began to listen to the doctor in a very absent-minded way, playing with his pen, till at the last the doctor got a trifle nettled.

"You don't seem to be taking much interest in this piece of rascality, sergeant," sez he. "Perhaps I'm giving you too much trouble."

"It's not that, doctor," sez the sergeant; "I'm thinking of something else. You see your case is as clear as noonday—obtaining money under false pretences. An' I'll tell you what'll happen. We'll arrest the prisoner—to-night, as a matter of fact, because we have information that he's staying over the fair day with his uncle. Very well; he'll plead that the whole thing was a joke, the Bench'll take a lenient view, an' he'll be let off with a caution. Professionally speaking," sez he, "there's nothing in the case. But a much more interesting point, an' one that will lead further, is"—the sergeant paused an' tapped the doctor on the arm—"Where did he get the ducks?"

"Oh, you old fool!" sez the doctor to himself. For he seen in a minute the hole he had landed himself in.

"Where would he get them?" sez he out loud, just to gain time.

"Suppose he poached them," sez the sergeant, levelling his pipe suddenly at the doctor like Sherlock Holmes, an' no doubt feeling like Sherlock Holmes inside.

"Oh, no, sergeant," sez the doctor in a shocked kind of a way; "he couldn't have *poached* them."

"It wouldn't surprise me one bit," sez the sergeant. "An' if he has we've got him by the heels at last. He's been fined five times for poaching already. If he's convicted now not even the Ballygullion Bench will have the face to keep him out of jail. An' he's here in the town at our hands, that's a great point. It's the danger of a polisman's life to go after him with a warrant up in the hills. I'll enter the false pretences case first of all," sez he, "an' when I have him safe under lock an' key, I'll investigate the question of the poaching at my ease."

But by this time the doctor's head had cleared.

"Do you know, sergeant," sez he, "I'm not sure that we should go on with this false pretences case at all."

The sergeant gaped at him.

"Why not?" sez he. "Your evidence is clear. You'll swear you paid him the five shillings, won't you?"

"Of course I will," sez the doctor. "But will the Bench believe me?—Oh, I know, sergeant," sez he, "they wouldn't think

"Suppose he poached them," sez the sergeant, levelling his pipe suddenly at the doctor like Sherlock Holmes.

I was telling lies. But I'm terribly absent-minded; everybody knows that; an' they might think I was day-dreaming about that five shillings. When I come to think of it, I'm not too clear in my mind whether I ever gave it to Lenahan at all. You see now, sergeant."

"But there's your wife's evidence as well, an' Pat Murphy's evidence on the top of that," sez the sergeant, seeing nothing at all except that if he didn't stir himself Billy Lenahan looked like slipping through his fingers once more.

"Of course there's Pat Murphy's evidence," sez the doctor. "But between you an' me an' the wall, I wouldn't place much dependence on Pat. You know Big Billy an' him are as thick as thieves, an' what one says the other'll swear to."

Now the sergeant wasn't very bright, but at the same time he wasn't altogether a fool, an' he began to see that for some reason or other the doctor wasn't near as keen on prosecuting Billy Lenahan as when he came in. So he tried another tack.

"I'll tell you what, doctor," sez he. "I'll go out an' make further investigation before I arrest the prisoner, an' in the meantime I'll not enter the charge. Do you go quietly home. If I get any fresh evidence I'll call at your house on my way back."

The doctor was only too glad to agree to anything that looked like squashing the case, so they left it at that.

NOW all this time I had been hangin' about Ballygullion, trying to grab hold of Billy, for, though he'd played me a cute trick, he was an old crony, an' I didn't mean to let the polis get him if I could help it. At last I ran into him in the main street. He didn't take to his heels as I expected, but spoke to me quite cool.

"I suppose you haven't the price of a pair of ducks about you?" sez he.

"No," sez I, "but you have the price of a pair of handcuffs in your pocket if you don't mind out. Do you know the polis are likely on your traces by now?"

"I have an inkling," sez Billy, not a bit put out. "I'm on my way down to the doctor's about it."

"It's the only wise thing you've done to-day," sez I. "I hope it's not too late. An' seeing that you are making restitution," sez I, holding out my hand, "you may as well pay me back that five bob you swindled me out of."

But Billy was too downy for me.

"I'll pay you when I'm paying the doctor," sez he, very oily. "I like to have a witness when I'm dealing with a slippery customer like you."

"Don't trouble, Billy," sez I, off-hand like. "It'll do quite well to-morrow. But I'll walk up as far as the doctor's with you, for company."

For I was curious to see the end of the business.

THE doctor was very high-handed with Billy.

"Not a word, sir," sez he, before Billy could open his mouth. "Put down fourteen shillings and sixpence on the table there, or I won't hold any communication with you at all."

"Fourteen-an'-sixpence!" sez Billy, looking at him as if he was all bewildered.

"Yes," sez the doctor, very sharp. "Five shillings I gave you, four-an'-sixpence you cheated my wife out of, an' five shillings you got out of Pat Murphy, which I paid back to him afterwards."

"Was that the five shillings you asked me for just now, Pat?" sez Billy to me very innocent.

"Well, blast you," sez I under my breath; for, troth, I didn't know what to answer.

"I paid that to Pat," sez Billy, still very bland, "supposin' that he meant to give it to you; an' perhaps he did—now, don't be interrupting me, Pat. Then there's the five shillings for the ducks. That leaves four-an'-six——"

"You may take the ducks back," sez the doctor, still very short. "I don't want them now."

"I don't want them now myself," sez Billy. "The sergeant is up searching my uncle's house this minit, an' if he doesn't find the feathers of two poached ducks he's even a bigger fool than I take him for. You just keep the ducks in the meantime, doctor, an' explain that I poached them for you. You needn't be afraid of him as long as you have drugs in the dispensary. I think you said four-an'-sixpence," sez Billy, feelin' in his pockets.

"Not at all, not at all, Billy," sez the doctor, very bluff an' kindly all at once. "Keep your money in your pocket. I know the whole thing was only a joke on your part. An', between you an' me. I'd rather you took the ducks. If the sergeant *should* make any trouble for you, I'll speak to him on your behalf. As you say, being police doctor I have a good deal of influence in that quarter."

"Look here, then, doctor," sez Billy, that hearty that I knowed in a minit some fresh rascality had come into his head, "you're an old friend, an' I won't let you down. Besides, I played you a dirty trick to-day, even if it was half in a joke. There's no chance whatever of my getting off about the poaching. The feathers are wild-duck feathers, beyond doubt, and, as well as that, Major Donaldson's gamekeeper saw me crossing the marshes with a gun. I'll be convicted all right; but if you'll stand my friend I'll get off with forty shillin's of a fine. Put the costs at another pound. Give me, say, five pounds, an' I'll plead guilty an' hold my tongue about you—an', of course, about Pat here." He moved over a bit, out of the reach of my boot. The doctor was eyein' him very dubious, but said nothin' for a minit.

"You see, it would give the sergeant a terrible hold of you if you squared him on your own account," goes on Billy, as if he was planning how he could manage things best for the doctor, "but he would think nothing of your saying a kind word for me."

Still the doctor said nothing, but the look he took at Billy was enough to give him the mange.

"It would be the cheapest way, too," goes on Billy, "for if I don't plead guilty, Pat might be called as a witness; an' he wouldn't perjure himself for anybody short of about seven-pound-ten, or a ten-pound note if he happened to kiss the book instead of his thumb."

The doctor looked at me, as much as to say, "What'll I do with this ruffian?"

"Give him the money, doctor," sez I, "an' hope that he'll be caught in something he can be hanged for. He's right, you know. You can square the sergeant for him; but if you squared him for yourself you'd have your head in a noose for the rest of your days."

The doctor took five pounds out of his pocket, an' handed them to Billy.

"Pray for good health, Lenahan," sez he; "night an' morning pray for it, that's all. For if ever I have to prescribe for you you'll have a hard death."

But Billy wasn't a bit put about.

"Thank ye, doctor," sez he, putting the notes in his pocket. "Don't be afraid but I'll stand by you. When you did go into the poaching line, you went into it with a gentleman. I'll away back to my uncle's an' give myself up to the sergeant, just to save everybody trouble."

With that there comes a knock, an' the next minit we heard the sergeant's voice in the hall.

"If you don't mind, doctor," sez Billy, "I'll slip out by the back an' up to my uncle's before I go to the barracks. It'll give you a chance of squaring the sergeant to-night."

"If the back stairs led to hell," sez the doctor, very wicked, "I'd open the door for you myself, an' kick you down the first flight.—Good night, sergeant," sez he, the next minit, as the sergeant came in. "Well, did you find any evidence against that rascal?"

"Before answering that question," sez the sergeant, very weighty an' cautious, "I would like to know are you in possession of what I would call Exhibit A, I mean the carcasses of the ducks. Because if you are," sez he, "I wish with your permission to compare them with Exhibit B, the feathers of a duck an' a drake that I have in this bag."

"Certainly we have the ducks," sez the doctor, ringing the bell. "Tell your mistress to come here, Mary," sez he to the maid. "My dear," to the wife, "say nothing to Mary, but just bring those two ducks from the pantry."

"Ha!" sez the sergeant, examining the ducks. "They're very big for wild ducks, aren't they, doctor?"

"What's that?" sez the doctor. "Begad, when I come to think of it they are big."

"Comparing them with Exhibit B," sez the sergeant, fetching a handful of feathers out of the bag, "I would say that Exhibit B was plucked off the carcasses of Exhibit A within twenty-four hours, and that Exhibit A was then two Aylesburys, an' not wild ducks at all."

The doctor looked at his wife, an' his wife looked at him. He clenched his fist an' opened his mouth to speak, then he took a grip on himself an' said nothing for a minit or two.

"Do you go an' look in the yard, Maria," sez he, "for I'd burst a blood-vessel, if what I think is true."

The wife was back in a brace of shakes, fair quivering with the rage.

"Go after that—that pirate, Lenahan," she stuttered to the sergeant. "He's sold us our own ducks twice."

"Three times, my dear," sez the doctor, getting cool as the wife got mad. "Pat Murphy paid for them, too. Come back, sergeant," sez he, for the sergeant had loosened his baton in the sheath and was

"Go after that—that pirate, Lenahan," she stuttered to the sergeant. "He's sold us our own ducks twice."

half way to the door—"come back. You mustn't arrest him. Now, you mustn't," sez he, waving his hand at the sergeant, "that's all about it. I can stand a joke against myself. I don't like it, still I can stand it. But I'm not going to be made the laughing-stock of the whole Province of Ulster, an' that's what I'll be if this comes out."

"But—but, doctor——" breaks in the sergeant.

"Now say no more," sez the doctor. "It's the first favour I've ever asked you, an' it'll be the last. Remember what I've done for you. You're a man with a weak stomach, an' you know how I've handled it. I've taken more interest in it than if it was my own child. I've sat up at night thinking out what would be best for it, an' you're well aware of what I made of it in the end. When you came to Ballygullion, you were living on infants' food an' raw eggs, an' now you could digest sulphate of copper an' sea-shells. Cross me in this, an' fall into my hands again—well, there are about forty-seven different ways of poisoning a police sergeant, and I'll try them all on you one by one."

The doctor's wife could thole no longer.

"Sergeant," sez she, fair shaking with the rage, "if you let that scoundrel off——"

"Listen, Maria," sez the doctor. "I'm good-natured, but I can be cross when I like; an' I'm nearer it this minit than you, maybe, think. *Keep quiet!*" he sez with a roar. "Take those ducks, sergeant—take the ducks!" sez he, looking very savage at the wife, as much as to say, "Countermand that if you dare," "an' do you an' your men eat them for your suppers."

The sergeant looked at the doctor's wife a bit scared, but picked up the ducks an' walked out. The doctor's wife slammed out of the room an' stamped upstairs, making twice as much noise as the sergeant, in spite of his boots.

"Here, Pat," sez the doctor, "just to show you I didn't believe that scoundrel Lenahan." He poured me out a glass of whisky. "And now take this down to the police barracks. It's twenty years old," sez he, "an' if it wasn't for the hole I'm in divil a policeman's thrapple would it ever anoint."

He reached me a ten-glass bottle of whisky, an' I put it in my pocket. "Good night," sez he. "I hope you'll have a better night's rest than I'm looking forward to."

AS I went down the street in the dark, who should come out of a gateway but Big Billy of the Hills.

"That'll do now," sez he, before I could get started to him. "The parish priest could preach the head off you; so do you let it alone, an' tell me what has happened."

So I told him what had happened after he left, an' showed him the bottle of whisky.

"Twenty years old," sez Billy. "It's a sin an' a shame. All a policeman should have to do with the like of that is to arrest some lucky fellow for sucking too much of it. Pat," sez he, slappin' his leg at a sudden notion, "let me fetch it to him. If he doesn't forgive me even poteen-making when he's half through that, he's not mortal. Ye think I'll not give it to him," sez Billy. "Here, take that pound note, an' if I don't hand the bottle to the sergeant do you keep the note."

"This bottle, Billy?" sez I, holdin' on to it still.

"That bottle," sez Billy.

"An' this whisky," sez I.

"That whisky," sez Billy, "every drop of it. God forgive me, I hope it may choke him. Listen now," sez he. "I'm not too dirty particular; but beyond a little respectable poaching an' poteen making I've never stood in a dock in my life, an' I don't want to bring disgrace on the Lenahan name. I think I can see my way to clear myself of this duck-stealing, an' the whisky will pave the way. Do you think I've no family pride," sez he, "that I'd have my name connected with the larceny of two ducks?"

"I think you've forgotten that your grandfather was hanged for sheep-stealing," sez I. "There's the whisky, but if you imagine anything less than a gallon of it would whitewash you with the sergeant, you're putting your finger in your own eye."

"Tell me," sez Billy, "did you see any tramps in the town to-day?"

"Only Big Black Barney," sez I. "Why?"

"Never mind," sez he. "Come on to the barracks."

When the pair of us walked into the barracks, the sergeant near fell off his chair. But Billy didn't give him time to speak.

"Sergeant," sez he, "you've been blaming me in the wrong about them ducks."

"H'm!" sez the sergeant, coughing very dry.

"I may have played a joke about the selling of them," sez Billy, "but I'm innocent of stealing them."

"The doctor has a different opinion," sez the sergeant, still drier.

"That was before he heard my side of the story," sez Billy. "An' when he did hear it, he begged my pardon an' gave me this bottle of whisky. Twenty-year-old," sez Billy. "Pull the cork, an' just perfume the room with it. I'm giving it to yourself an' the constable here. I felt I couldn't do less after the joke I played on you all."

Billy grabbed the ducks off the wall and pitched them over to me.

The sergeant picked up the bottle, an' when his eyes fell on the label, if he hadn't been in his uniform I believe he'd ha' smiled. Then he pulled himself together.

"Where did you get the ducks, Lenahan?" sez he. "Before withdrawing the cork I'll require to be satisfied about that."

"I bought them in perfect innocence in Ballygullion main street about three o'clock this afternoon," sez Billy.

"From whom?" sez the sergeant, whipping out his notebook.

"From a tramp," sez Billy.

"A tramp!" sez the sergeant, all excited. "This is a larceny case, or maybe breaking and entering, if the ducks was locked up. Describe the individual in question," sez he, flutterin' over the leaves to get a clean one.

"Let me think, now," sez Billy.

"Was he—was he tall an' black-avised?" sez the sergeant.

"He was not," sez Billy. "A wee ferrety man with red hair—an'—an' a squint."

"What!" roars the sergeant. "I have the very man in the lock-up at this minit. I see it all. At three he sold you the ducks, an' at four he was that drunk—no doubt on the proceeds—that he wasn't even able to assault the police. That's his dog at the fire. Come on, constable," sez he, catching down a bunch of keys, "he'll be sober by now. We'll have him out an' interrogate him on the spot."

An' off the two of them runs, leaving Billy an' me gaping at each other.

"Now you've done it, Billy!" sez I.

But Billy recovered himself in a twinkling. He grabbed the ducks off the wall, pitched them over to me, an' then sent the dog out of the street door, howlin', with a couple of smart kicks.

"Throw the ducks into the ruined walls at the end of the street, Pat," he sez to me. 'We'll get them later. Sergeant, sergeant," he shouts, running down the passage, "the dog's away with your ducks!"

An' just as I was rid of the ducks, the sergeant goes past me, galloping, an' the constable after him, an' then Billy, a bit behind.

" Run after the sergeant, Pat," sez Billy, " an' keep seeing the dog every minute or two. He's gone the other way, so you'll be quite safe. I'll after him, an' keep him on the move."

For about ten minutes I had the sergeant an' the constable seeing as many dogs as if they were at a show, an' then the sergeant had a brain wave.

" Come back to the barracks, men," sez he. " What are we thinkin' of? The brute'll return for his master, to be sure."

SO we made our way back to the barracks, puffing an' blowing; an' on our way we met Billy, worse winded than any of us."

" The sergeant thinks the dog'll be back at the barracks, Billy," sez I.

" Barracks, blethers," sez Billy. " I chased him half a mile up the Belfast road, an' him with the ducks in his mouth, I could near swear. If I'd only indigestion like you, sergeant, I'd been thin enough to catch him."

" He might have fetched a circumjacent, all the same," sez the sergeant, " an' be at the barracks this minit. God bless my soul," he sez, clapping his hand to his pocket, " I've left my keys sticking in the lock of the black-hole! I hope I hadn't the door open. Run, men, run, or I'm disgraced! "

The four of us dashed down the passage together; an' when we came to the black-hole it was empty, an' the door open; but the keys were in the lock.

The sergeant grabbed them with something between a curse and a blessing.

" Good luck to him wherever he has got to," sez he, drawing a long breath. " If there'd been real badness in the crather he'd have took the keys with him. We'll not follow him. Spill a bottle of ink over the charge sheet, constable, an' go an' fetch a corkscrew."

But with that Billy uttered an oath.

" The whisky! " sez he.

The four of us up the passage quicker than we had come down it; an' when we got to the orderly-room the bottle of whisky was gone. We were all gunked enough, I'll give in; but Billy's face was the picture of the lot, an' his language left even the sergeant standing.

" Telephone, sergeant," he splutters, " telephone all round the country. You might catch him before he has the whisky drunk. Ring up Drumcree barracks. That's the only way he could have gone, an' not met us."

An' then he caught my eye, an' stopped all at once.

" Maybe better let him go," sez he.

" Sergeant," sez I, " for a whole lot of reasons I'd advise you to let sleeping dogs lie. You can console yourself with remembering that it's Billy's whisky is gone."

" If it had been even ten-year-old I wouldn't have minded," sez the sergeant. " But you're right. Let the rascal go, whisky an' ducks an' all. I don't grudge him them. After all, sure I've saved my stripes. An' Lenahan," sez he, becoming very official all at once, " when you get back to them hills of yours, and are tempted to let your mind run on poteen again, think on the lovely liquor you have lost this night, an' don't pollute the world with anything less noble."

" I didn't believe the sergeant had that much poetry in him," sez Billy, as we walked down the road. " I'll think better of him after that speech. Where are you going? " sez he, as I made to turn into the ruined walls.

" You surely haven't forgot the ducks?" sez I, staring at him.

" They're at my uncle's this minit, cooking for our supper," sez Billy. " It was running up there with them had me so badly out of breath.—Here's Pat Murphy for supper, too, uncle," sez he when we got to the house. 'Twas him stole the ducks, so he must have his share. Shut the door, Pat. If the polis smells them you'll not get less than a month. Reach me over that bottle of poteen."

" No poteen for me, Billy," sez I, " thank you all the same. I'm of the sergeant's opinion. If I can't have the twenty-year-old I'll drink nothing meaner."

" Oh, all right," sez Billy, " if you're so high-minded."

He took the bottle in his hand, an' poured himself out a glass, then turned the label towards me an' winked at me with a roguery in his eye past all describing.

" Ye dirty dog! " sez I. " An' you let the poor tramp be blamed for it."

" Well, what d'you want? " sez Billy, not turning a hair. " Didn't I let him out of the black-hole? You wouldn't expect me to make him an address an' presentation as well? "

He put the whisky to his head and took a long pull.

" If he chokes on it," sez I to myself. " I'll tell the sergeant, an' clear the tramp's memory."

But Billy let the whisky down slowly, lingering over it to the last drop; an' then smacked his lips an' poured himself out another jorum. So I reached for the bottle too.

" After all," sez I to myself, " if Providence can put up with the big ruffian, so can I."

WILLIAM BROWN

The Story of a Grand Passion

By

H. de VERE STACPOOLE

Illustrated by
REGINALD CLEAVER

I.

THE ships of the Hollander line do not as a rule touch at Algiers, but a call from somewhere down south for Algerian wine and tobacco deflected the *De Reuyter*, so that, looking out of my port one bright Sunday morning, I saw the familiar city once again burning in the sun from the line of white arcades to the war monument.

Of course I may be prejudiced, but for me the whole coast of North Africa, from Riff-land down to Tunis, is an ash heap, a howling wilderness, at best the Yorkshire moors up-ended against an alien sky, and for me, bar Bloomsbury, Algiers with its false reflections of the Orient, its vile weather, north aspect, and filthy Arabs, the most detestable place on the earth.

So I wasn't going ashore.

There were a hundred and twenty passengers, mostly Dutch, and as soon as the floating landing-stage was connected up with the ship, they went almost to a man to see what could be seen in a four hours' stay, for the *De Reuyter* was due out again at three o'clock.

I am not good at making friends on board ship, and Le Merquier—that was his name, as I afterwards discovered—was not a person to rouse the spirit of friendship in one's breast even ashore.

He was a " foreigner " and dressed like one. Foreigners when making a sea voyage generally dress for the occasion; the Parisians are the quaintest when thus attired for their encounters with Neptune, and Le Merquier was a Parisian. He had discarded the violent plaid shawl neck-wrapper that had adorned him during the Bay, but he still retained the flat cap with a peak.

" You have been here before," said this individual, pulling a deck-chair close to mine and taking his seat.

" How do you know that ? "

" Simply—because you are not going ashore." He chuckled, and the pleasantry made him at once acceptable; at least it condoned his eccentricity of manner and dress. There was also a touch of Sherlock Holmes in the deduction.

" One might fancy you a detective," I said.

" I am," he replied; " at least, an agent in the employ of the Hoffmeyer Company, which I assure you is better than being an agent in the pay of the Paris Sûreté, for the pay is better and the employment more of a luxury trade." He laughed. " Divorce," said he, " just that one word and what it means—I mean in the way of business. What thousands of men it employs, from the Paris *huissier* to the English judge! It is an industry, in fact, one of those industries produced by the complexity of modern society, for the cave-man did not know of it; at least, he called it ' a blow with a club ' if he called it anything, and, anyhow, he employed no agents."

I began to like this man somehow, despite his boots, which had patent-leather toe-caps and the pointings that showed him a Parisian at soul—that is to say, a Provincial (for Paris is a Province, not a city); a mocker at everything he could not understand—that is to say, everything outside the mental atmosphere of Paris; and a feminist—that is to say, a creature that would suffocate out of the atmosphere of women.

" What you say is right enough," I replied; " all the same there are husbands—that is to say, beings who don't look so joyfully as you might imagine on this roaring industry whose finished product is put out

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by the Divorce Courts. But leaving these aside one must admit that, as you hint, the business you are employed in must have its moments. In fact, if you cared to wield a pen, as they say, you might in a series of memoirs——"

"Nothing," said he. "Monsieur, the dullest business in the world from the point of view of romance, or, indeed, of realism, is the business that leads to divorce nowadays. One case is like another, just deception condoned, or resented in the law courts. There is no such thing as a grand passion to be found in the society of 1926. It seems as though the Great War ran over Romance as a taxi-cab might run over a dog—leaving nothing but the soulless skin. But there is one case—there is always one case to give the maker of generalities the lie—yes, there is one case which has happened in my practice, the case of a grand passion which, occurring in this soulless age, is perhaps worth recording. I will tell you about it if you care to hear.

II.

"TWO years ago," said Le Merquier, "when at Marseilles, I received a message from my firm accompanied by the dossier of a case. The message told me to take up the case, which was that of a Mr. William Brown, a retired bill broker of Wimbledon, near London.

"Brown, a married man, had left his home some weeks before, travelling to Genoa and intending to make a tour of the coast towns such as Rapallo and Spotorno, returning home by way of Paris. He hadn't come home. That is the sort of thing that happens to many a married man, and in the case of Brown it was not the fact of his non-return that brought about inquiry so much as the fact that he was suddenly wanted at home.

"It seemed that this gentleman had not only a wife, but a rich aunt, named Miss Smith, a maiden aunt, one of those English-women one sees on the Continent in the best hotels, wealthy, beyond middle age, diffusing around themselves an atmosphere of depression and piety. Anyhow, this lady was pious, she was also worth two million francs, and besides our friend Brown she had also another nephew, James Brown, William's brother, who had an eye on the francs, for I must tell you that William was her favourite and destined, if all went well, to inherit her fortune.

"Now follow me. Miss Smith fell ill, and Brown's wife telegraphed to his last given address, which was the Hôtel de Rome, Spotorno. She received no reply. The foolish woman confided her trouble to James Brown, who set out for Italy in quest of the lost one, hoping to make some profit out of the business and sure, at all events, of his expenses. He reached Spotorno and found to his astonishment that not only was William Brown not there, but he had never stopped at the Hôtel de Rome or, indeed, at any other hotel in the place.

"'Oho!' said James, 'what is the meaning of this?'

"He went on to Genoa. He knew that William had come to Italy by sea, landing at Genoa and stopping at the Hôtel Belvedere; and thinking it possible that there might be traces, he came, as I said, to Genoa.

"Before leaving Spotorno, where he stayed two days investigating, he received a message that Miss Smith had entirely recovered from her seemingly dangerous illness, so that he had really no urgent motive now for his quest. But James was one of those men whom the Almighty has made in the likeness of a ferret. Besides, it seemed to him that if William were engaged in any shady business it might, if proved, knock William out of Miss Smith's good graces—a nice sort of brother you will say, but where money is concerned your ordinary man does not split hairs, and your real rogue—well!

"James arriving at the Belvedere not only found traces of William, but William himself. In fact, he almost ran into his arms in the entrance-hall. At the price of a hundred-lire note he found from the chief attendant that William had been staying at the hotel nearly ever since his arrival in Italy, six weeks in fact.

"Having obtained this information, he took himself and his traps off and put up for the night at the Londres, to brood on this matter and make his plans.

"William had been staying six weeks at the Belvedere, but the Belvedere, though palatial and a *hôtel de luxe*, is not the place where an ordinary sane Englishman would remain six weeks—no more than he would remain six weeks at Genoa railway station if the officials would permit him.

"For the Belvedere is a hotel of passage. People rarely stay for more than a couple of nights.

"When the tourist ships come in they discharge into the Belvedere, and next morning or so the Belvedere discharges into the railway station.

"Then again, Genoa is not a city that holds the tourist; when you have seen the Piazza Differari and the Campo Santo, a few of the old palaces and so forth, you have had enough of Genoa.

"And William had been staying six weeks in Genoa! There must be some attraction holding him, and the only attraction possible

to the mind of James was the attraction of some woman.

"Ah-ha! William, the virtuous inheritor to the virtuous Miss Smith, was carrying on an intrigue, that was clear—almost clear, at all events—but the thing was not definite.

"It was like a butterfly not yet caught. Before carrying the butterfly to Miss Smith for exhibition it had to be caught, and he could not catch it, for if William suspected his presence in Genoa, William would take fright. An agent had to be secured, and, inquiring from the people at the Londres, he found that mine was the best secret inquiry office, and there he went, and then as one of their agents I was put in touch with him.

"I disliked him at sight, but we must conquer our dislikes in business. I took his instructions. I was to go to the Belvedere, stay there and find out; 'get evidence,' those were the words of James, and he backed them with a cheque for five thousand lire, deposited for expenses.

"You have been here before," said he.
"How do you know that?"
"Simply—because you are not going ashore."

"I don't know whether you are acquainted with the Belvedere. It stands with a commanding view of the harbour, and it is perhaps the most cosmopolitan house in the world. For here come people from Rome, breaking their journey to Paris or Monte Carlo, and people from Monte Carlo bound for Rome, Dutchmen from the Dutch ships coming up from the East, there being in fact a Genoa-Amsterdam express run for those preferring the overland route. Then you have people from Algiers and the British East Indies, and, when great boats like the *Conte Verde* or *Conte Biancamano* put in, a flood of people from Rio and Buenos Aires; and lastly you have Americans from the boats of the Dollar line—and, in fact, from everywhere.

"One might fancy that such a mixed and changing crowd would be interesting to watch, but as a matter of fact I have always found that a crowd like this excites in me less of interest than depression. These

people, always changing before our eyes into other people, are not quite human; they are travellers, the interest they excite is like the interest excited by a museum. I had time to feel all this in the first few days and in the intervals of my watch upon Mr. Brown.

"The espionage was easy. He suspected nothing; a large, easy-going-looking man with an open expression of countenance, he seemed to have nothing on his mind, and his life was regular, very regular.

"At eight o'clock in the morning he rose, breakfasted at nine, then he read the latest English papers. Then about half-past ten he would go out and, as a rule taking tram number eleven, make for the Piazza Differari. Here he would walk, looking in at the shop windows. Having exhausted the interest to be found in the great arcades he would leave the Piazza Differari and stroll through the town, pausing sometimes before one of the old noble houses to look at it with that sort of unintelligent interest which one observes in the Anglo-Saxon let loose amongst antiquities. Then, punctual to the moment, he would return to the hotel as the clocks were striking the half-hour after midday.

"After luncheon he retired to his room. I believe he slept—I don't know. I only know that I did, for during this wearying period of espionage the monotony of the business was uncounterbalanced by any uncertainty as to the movements of my man.

"I was sure to find him in the lounge at afternoon tea-time, and after that he was sure to take me for another wearisome walk till near the time for dinner. After dinner he smoked in the lounge and had coffee, then he went to bed.

"The one saving factor in the whole of this dull situation was the food. I don't know any hotel where the cooking comes up to the cooking at the Belvedere, but even good food has its attractive limits, since one cannot always be eating, and on the third day I might have retired from this weary business had not a development taken place.

"Following him on the morning of the third day, I was led not to the Piazza Differari, but to the railway station. Here he took a ticket for Pegli, which is quite close, and at Pegli he took a walk on the desolate beach, where there is no sand, only grey stones.

"At a quarter-past twelve he entered the little hotel near the railway station, and, following in, I found him in the lounge writing a letter. You may ask yourself how it was possible to follow him for so long and every day without being perceived. Well, first of all, that is my art. The inquiry agent must have the art of being invisible; secondly, the unsuspecting human being is the most stupid animal in the whole world, as you will admit if you have ever seen an expert pickpocket at work. Thirdly, Mr. Brown was, I believe, of all human beings the least given to suspicion. Indeed, when I look back on that business, I sometimes feel ashamed of the hunt, but it was my trade, and however unsuspicious this gentleman might be, his actions laid him open to suspicion in others.

"Why, ever since he came to Italy, had he remained in Genoa, pretending all the time that he was travelling about—posting that letter at Spotorno from a hotel where he had never stayed? Where was the woman, in fact? For only on the supposition that he was under the spell of some siren were his actions accountable. I had tried out everything else with the help of James Brown. William was retired from business, so he could not be engaged in any business proposition, and indeed it would be hard to think of any business proposition requiring such manœuvres on his part. He was well-to-do, never speculated, and was abstemious in his habits. No, the only thing possible accounting for his eccentric actions was a woman—and yet there wasn't the ghost of a sign of one—at all events in his environment.

"I WENT into the little hotel determined on a new line of action.

"I found him, as I have said, in the lounge writing a letter, and then, when his letter was finished, I chummed up with him.

"'I believe I have seen you at Genoa, at the Belvedere,' I said.

"He cast his rather heavy eyes over me.

"'Yes,' he said, 'I believe I have seen you in the lounge. How do you like Pegli?'

"That was all the introduction, but it was enough. He seemed glad to have someone to talk to, and as we chatted I saw the address on the envelope, which he had left on the table.

"The thing was addressed to Mrs. William Brown, Kent Villa, Albert Road, Wimbledon.

"I proposed that we should lunch together, and he agreed. Before going into the *salle à manger* he posted the letter in the hotel letter-box—and there you are.

"I had gained the first step. I had caught him writing and addressing a letter to his wife—one of the most innocent acts in the world till one remembered that he had come to Pegli to do it. In other words, that he was hiding his Genoa address and keeping up the fiction at home that he was on the move.

"At lunch I talked to him about England,

"I found him in the lounge writing a letter, and when his letter was finished I chummed up with him."

and found to my surprise that not only was he willing to talk about himself and his affairs, but that also he was willing to talk about his wife. Not only that, he spoke of her in a way that made me feel almost sure his heart was not entirely divorced from her. On top of this—towards the cheese—he exhibited himself as being homesick, spoke of these d——d foreigners quite in the English style.

"'But anyhow,' he said, 'I'll be back soon now. I am leaving the day after to-morrow by the *Hooft*, a Hamburg boat which calls at Algiers and goes on to Southampton.'

"'Tell me,' I said; 'you English are funny people; you come abroad, and no sooner do you find yourselves abroad than you wish to get home again. Why did you come abroad?'

"I got the question right home like that without offence.

"'Well, to tell the truth,' said he, 'the house was being papered and painted, and my wife wanted to pay her mother a visit, and I did not want to go with my wife on the visit to her mother, and I got a circular one morning from a tourist agency pointing out the beauties of Italy, and my wife said things were cheap at Genoa (which they aren't), and she thought I would be able to get her some silk dresses; they don't search men's luggage at the English Customs for silk dresses, so her brother said, who had just returned from Italy; though why he couldn't have smuggled the stuff himself I don't know. So I said I would go for a couple of months and do Italy.'

"'And how do you like Italy now you've done it?' I asked.

"'Oh, it's not bad,' said he.

"He would not say anything more than that, and when I pressed him with questions, or rather suggestions, about Genoa, he was equally shy. But this much I made out: he had been in Genoa practically the whole time, held by the powerful attraction whose origin it was my business to discover. It was quite useless to ask him any direct question on the subject. I had already made up my mind on the procedure to be followed, which was to travel with him to Southampton if possible. If there were a woman in the case he would be sure to write, posting the letter at Algiers or Southampton, and if I

could not get hold of the letter, I at least could get hold of the address.

"I inquired of him the name of the shipping office, saying that as I was going to England myself I should be glad of the sea voyage, and he gave me the address, expressing the hope that he would have me as a fellow-voyager.

"Then we parted, he going back to Genoa and I remaining to pace the beach of Pegli, smoke a cigar, and think things over.

"I was at fault, and that is the truth. This man, acting in a most suspicious manner, was a man—it seemed to me—above suspicion. Or below it. He had neither the make of a conspirator nor of a lover. I felt as though, starting out to pursue a shark, I found myself following a jelly-fish. However, this strong impression did not amount to certainty, and going back to Genoa I booked a passage to Southampton."

III.

HE knocked off his story to light a cigar, and I sat listening to the shouting of the Arabs who were coaling a Japanese ship near by and wondering vaguely at all I was listening to, at my narrator and the way he had attached himself to me for the purpose of telling me a story—just as magazine people do in magazines.

Only in this yarn which he was spinning I felt the existence of a core different from the usual packing of your magazine story; villainy, love, and even infatuation seemed ruled out by the indicated character of William Brown.

"Heave ahead," I said.

"Yes," he replied. "Where was I? Oh, yes—Algiers. In the short run from Genoa to Algiers I scarcely saw my man, but on the morning we reached here I had better luck. Everyone was going ashore either for a char-à-bancs ride into the desolation of the hinterland or a visit to the flea market, or to buy carpets, swords of the Crusaders made in Birmingham, oranges, or simply drinks at the American bars and shady *cafés*. But William Brown did not land, he sat in a deck-chair just as you were sitting when I found you a little while ago, and, drawing a deck-chair beside him, we began to talk. I noticed before joining him that he had a big letter-case with him, into which he was dipping, bringing out cards—or was it letters?—every now and then, reading them carefully, and returning them.

"'There,' I said to myself, 'I have him now. If that letter-case does not contain the *raison d'être* of all the business, my name is not Le Merquier.' Letters or cards received from some woman, relative to some conspiracy, holding the secret of some business deal of maybe a shady nature—it does not matter, they are the crux of this affair and hold within them, I veritably believe, despite the seemingly glutinous and gelatinous disposition and character of their owner, the secret of a grand passion. 'Have not Englishmen hearts?' I said to myself, 'since even the tortoise is so possessed, and have I not a sure instinct that never fails me where the human mind is concerned? Yes. A grand passion, that is what I am on the trail of.' I felt that, said it to myself, and I was right.

"Seating myself beside William Brown, I began to talk of Algiers and its neighbourhood, and from Algiers the talk drifted to the North African littoral and the towns thereon of which my companion knew nothing, so that by degrees the talk came back to the boat, and we began discussing the passengers and the food and the peculiarities of Dutch cooking—cheese for breakfast seems a strange thing to find on the table, but it is amply atoned for by the dried eels. *Ciel*—the Dutch eels! You must know that Holland is famous not for tulips but eels. That is, among the cognoscenti; they catch them in the dykes and tranship them in big steamers that are all tanks—those divine eels! Well, well, also on board they had served the best goulash I have ever tasted. I spoke of it to William Brown; he remembered that it had been offered to him for luncheon on the day before, but he had missed it. He showed distress when I explained what exactly he had missed, for they serve with it all sorts of Eastern condiments, to be obtained only in Java and the Dutch East, but he recovered his serenity on the suggestion that it would most likely be served again, and we passed on to talk of other foods, for, to tell the truth, this subject is to me frankly interesting.

"Cookery is an art, and a good dinner is to me more ephemeral, perhaps, but as valuable as a good picture; you cannot hang it on a wall, it is true, or only in the hall of memory, yet how many really good pictures do we remember once they have passed beyond our sight?

"They served a dish at the Belvedere, a mixed grill of small fish, sardines and so forth, and mentioning it I found William Brown remembered it in exact detail, but neither of us could remember the name.

"'But wait a moment,' said he. He picked up the letter-case which was lying on the deck by his chair, and opening it produced a number of cards, the same I had seen him looking at half an hour before; close to them now I saw that they were hotel menus.

" He shuffled them and sighed, glancing over them one by one and throwing the discards back into the case, which he held on his knees.

" ' So you collect hotel menus ? ' said I, smiling to myself at this new form of collector, more original even than that prince and princess whose craze was match-boxes.

" ' Oh, I just kept them,' he replied, and there was that in his voice as he lovingly handled the pieces of cardboard that told me his whole story and explained to me the whole of the mystery which I had started to unravel.

" ' This,' said he, handing me a card, ' wasn't a bad luncheon.'

" I read :—

Minestrone Genovese.

Ombrine au Beurre.

Côte de Bœuf Bonne Femme.

Haricots Verts à l'Anglaise.

Galettes Côte d'Azur.

Fruits.

William Brown had a big letter-case with him, into which he was dipping.

" ' Look here,' I said straight out, ' you come to Italy to travel, yet you have stuck at Genoa the whole time—was it the cooking that held you ? '

" He confessed that it was.

" With the charming *naïveté* of a boy confessing to his first love he told me all.

" After fifty years of English cookery, or forty-eight, allowing two years to the time when he was weaned, he had struck the superb cuisine of the Belvedere ; he was held. Veal for the first time in his life appeared before him not as a calf or a lump of meat, but as a dream of many shapes ; so it was with the other basic forms of food. He was held, he succumbed, and he was ashamed.

" It was the Englishman in him that suffered shame ; not for a good deal would he have admitted to his family and friends that the love of good eating had demobilized him and kept him a prisoner in Genoa. Hence the journeys here and there to post letters to prove that he was on the move. To me, a fellow gastronome and a Frenchman, he admitted the fact, or at least permitted me to perceive it, and in return I told him all, and of how I had been employed as an agent to follow his tracks.

" We became very fast friends, and when we reached London he insisted on my coming to lunch with him at Wimbledon. ' You will see,' said he, and I did. I also tasted."

Le Merquier sighed. He seemed to have nothing more to say, and I had lost interest, for the siren of the *De Reuyter* was lifting the roofs of Algiers with its first warning of departure, and a steward had just stepped from the saloon companion-way with a tray of the cocktails served free to passengers on Sundays.

Fifty Years of Teaching Swimming

By

PROF. H. R. PEARCE

(Swimming Instructor at Holborn Baths)

My 75,000 pupils—Winston Churchill's first swimming lessons—Stories of other celebrities I have taught—Captain Webb: "My outstanding memory"—Fooling 4,000 people—Some under-water "stunts."

AT the opening of the present season I had the pleasure of seeing my seventy-five-thousandth pupil swim across the Holborn Bath, thus passing another landmark in my career of teaching Londoners to swim. Now, in my sixty-eighth year, I can look back at the half-century that I have spent at this task and note with interest how fortune has smiled or frowned upon the men and women of all social ranks whom I knew at a time when they had no other ambition than to be able to discard my safety belt and water wings!

All their names, seventy-five thousand of them, are in my little black books in which I enter each new pupil and report his progress. In one of these appears a brief entry which, in the light of later knowledge, is of some importance. The item is dated 1890, and reads: "Winston Churchill—swam a width to-day." I derive much satisfaction from the thought that, though I now pay him bi-yearly cheques for income-tax, there was a time when I was literally his sole support! He was then about sixteen, and I can remember no more apt pupil than he. After his sixth lesson he could do anything in the water. He was supremely self-confident, and soon became one of the best swimmers and divers of his age in London.

He used to waste half the lesson talking, usually about politics, and I well recall his youthful scorn when I chanced to remark that the doings at Westminster failed to excite me.

Prof. H. R. Pearce.

"What!" he gasped, "you pay rent and taxes, and yet don't take an interest in politics? Why, if I were a man like you, I should want to be standing on a box in Hyde Park and telling people things!" Later he told me in confidence that he meant to be Chancellor of the Exchequer one day, like his father; a prophecy which, in view of the business-like way he set about learning to swim, I never doubted. And there was another factor that proved the child to be father to the man. Young Winston was a wizard at diving for pennies in the deep end of the bath, an accomplishment he now employs with marked success in another place! I also taught "Jack" Churchill, Winston's brother, at the same time, and frequently they were accompanied to the Marylebone Baths by their old nurse.

At the same time I was teaching the Cecil brothers, Lord Robert and Lord Hugh. The latter I recollect as a young stripling who looked extremely delicate. He lacked confidence, but had plenty of grit, and eventually swam well. It was a long time before I could persuade him to keep his hands with those long, thin fingers under the water in making a stroke. I was also hampered by the fact that his family doctor had sent me a letter warning me that he must not be

kept in the water for more than two-and-a-half minutes at a time. I used to scold him, too, for driving home from the baths in a hansom cab, and told him that everyone should take a brisk walk after a bathe to avoid chill.

At the other extreme of daring were the two sons of Lord Kensington and both Lord Oxford's boys, who would come to the baths apparently with the sole ambition of drowning themselves! Raymond Asquith, especially, was a fine swimmer. Another of the same party was young Mr. Stuart-Wortley, whom I dubbed "The Marine Firework." You began to tell him how to perform a stroke, and before the words were half uttered he had already plunged into the deep end to try it! And usually he succeeded brilliantly, so quick was his intuitive knowledge of the art.

The late Earl of Carnarvon's name also appears in my records. I remember him as a boy of eight years, fair, curly-haired, and extremely likeable. By his eighth lesson he could swim the breast and side strokes, and dive with any other boy of his age in the bath.

IN 1884 I had an engagement at the Richmond Baths, and one day I noticed two young men swimming boisterously while a tutor watched them from the side. They were so clean-limbed and of such fine physique that I asked the tutor their names. They proved to be Prince Adolphus and his brother, sons of the Duke of Teck, and subsequently I was frequently in the water with them, giving them hints and, I regret to record, receiving sundry duckings from the skylarking Princes!

Once I acted as instructor to pupils from Lowdon House School, St. John's Wood, and recall that several of them afterwards made names for themselves in various branches of the Arts. Two of these were young Gerald du Maurier and Gilbert Frankau. The novelist was a very timid boy, who eventually learned to swim well. As a fact, my experience is that the studious type of pupil is the hardest to teach. He is preoccupied, self-conscious, and lacking in the confidence to let the water carry him. But in the end he generally swims better than the daredevil who wants to run before he can walk and never bothers to study the theory of swimming.

Then there were George Grossmith and his brother Lawrence, sons of the grand old "G. G." The present George Grossmith, then about twelve, showed none of the laughter-raising qualities he now possesses. He took his swimming very seriously, and without the slightest trouble assimilated all that I had to tell him. He used to speak of how his father had a private theatre at his home, where they held family theatricals.

Probably the biggest surprise given me by any pupil came from young Freddie Smultzer, an American boy, aged sixteen. I had taught him to swim, and when one day he saw me swim two lengths of the Holborn Baths under water, he remarked, coolly:—

"That's nothing, Professor; I could do more myself!" and with no more ado he immediately plunged in and actually completed *three* lengths before coming to the surface!

I knew at once that here was a lad of exceptional ability, and promptly arranged for an official trial. A few days later a number of well-known sportsmen attended, and old "Bob" Watson, who used to report the boxing and swimming events for *The Sporting Life*, came to act as judge. Smultzer's great aim was to swim four lengths under water and so beat the world's record established by James Finney. Against my advice, the American lad began at the deep end and was only three feet off the record distance when he came to the surface. If he had begun at the shallow end, he would have finished there also, and the lessened pressure would probably have helped him to complete the distance. Even so, it was an amazing feat, and stirred the entire sporting

"I can remember no more apt pupil than Winston Churchill."

world. Curiously enough, Smultzer never equalled this first performance. He returned in triumph to America and, I believe, took up a ranch.

Mention of "Bob" Watson recalls the story of how his hair turned white in a night. He had placed practically all his savings, a considerable sum, in the Birkbeck Bank, and when a sudden run on the bank's funds caused rumours to be circulated that a crash was imminent, Watson stayed outside the bank for a whole night and day, believing that his savings were gone for ever. In the end he was paid, but the strain of that thirty-six hours' vigil bleached his hair!

Other well-known names that leap at me as I peruse my faded records are those of the sons of Lord George Hamilton; Sir Edward White, first Chairman of the London County Council, whose widow was the victim of the Jacoby murder; Max Pemberton and his brother; David Devant, and the sons of John MacWhirter, R.A. There was also Lord Wellesley, who came to me for a life-saving course, and a week after he was proficient dived from Putney Bridge and saved a woman, a would-be suicide.

Another was Mr. Harry Paxton, who, thirty years ago, was in trouble with the police for causing obstruction in Throgmorton Street while dealing in shares. This genial jobber was six feet seven inches in height, and at the time he came to me for swimming lessons weighed twenty-one stone. It raised one of the biggest laughs the City has ever known when two constables, by no means small men, escorted him to the police-station, looking like children beside his massive bulk.

Yet another pupil was Mr. Warwick Brookes, a past member of Parliament for Mile End. He was the son-in-law of Sandow, the famous strong man, and one day when I called at Mr. Brookes's office I inquired what were the contents of six large sacks that all but filled the floor space.

"Postal orders!" he said, briefly—thousands of them, sent by people desirous of purchasing one of Sandow's health appliances!

Captain Webb, the first man to swim the Channel.

My oldest pupil was J. Tasker Embleton, a well-known figure of the London of his day. He was sixty-eight at the time, and after his tenth lesson could swim like any young man. From then till the week before his death, at the age of eighty, he was to be seen regularly every morning at the Holborn Baths. At the other extreme was a little girl who could just swim across the bath on her fourth birthday!

At least two alleged murderers figure among my pupils! My readers may remember the Scott and Monson murder, in which an English lord was lured to America and shot, the murderers' prize being the three thousand pounds for which his life was insured. As a boy Scott was under my instruction, as was also Maltby, who afterwards became notorious as the murderer-tailor of Hanover Place. Previously I had taught his father, who was tailor to Charles Dickens!

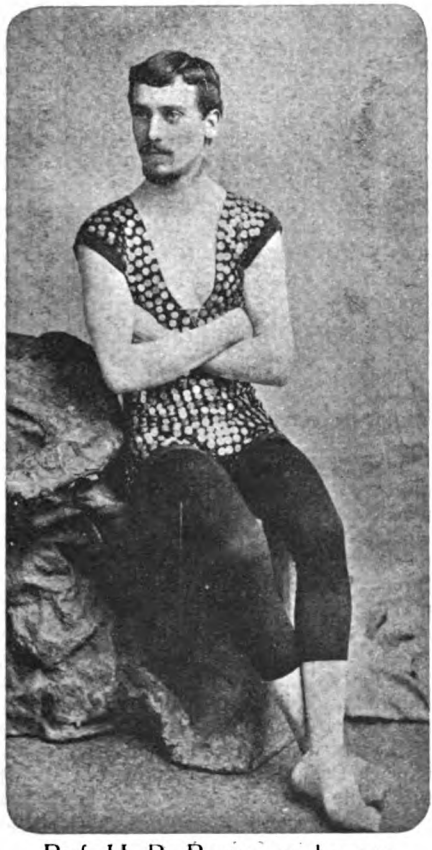
I like to think that, by proxy, I saved a woman's life from the *Titanic* disaster. She was the daughter of a well-known Army colonel whose name I am not at liberty to mention, and she came to me one day with a request for some advice on how to proceed in the event of a shipwreck. I thereupon cautioned her to avoid joining the general rush for the side at the first alarm, and above all not to jump overboard and court disaster in the struggling throng in the water. Instead she was to don a life-belt and wait till the ship gave its death tilt; then to walk up the sloping decks, and, just as the ship was settling down, to walk down the decks again into the water and swim clear. A short time afterwards she was aboard the *Titanic* when the disaster occurred, and following my instructions she swam quietly about for twenty minutes and was saved, while hundreds who had jumped overboard were drowned.

Of my seventy-five thousand pupils exactly a third were schoolboys, taught in batches of fifty when for twenty years I was employed by the West Ham Council. Among these keen youngsters were the sons

of " Bill " Thorne, M.P. It was sometimes difficult to persuade the boys to immerse their heads, and, as I never believed in forcing matters, I used to throw halfpennies into the bath, which were kept by the boys who retrieved them. I have since calculated that in those twenty years I spent two hundred pounds in halfpennies !

It was inevitable that my career brought me in close contact with all the best swimmers, amateur and professional, in an era that probably saw the peak of popularity attained by swimming as a national sport and spectacle.

Perhaps my outstanding memory is that of gallant Captain Webb, the first man to swim the Channel, who now sleeps in the little cemetery beside Niagara. I was still in my teens at the time that Webb leaped to fame by reason of his Channel feat, and it was therefore very gratifying to me when his manager sought my assistance in teaching Webb the side stroke. Webb had never been able to do this properly, and so every morning for six weeks I swam thirty lengths of the bath with Webb close behind me carefully copying my stroke. He improved rapidly, and at the end of that period proved his ability by beating by means of this stroke the famous Beckwith in a race of sixteen miles.



Prof. H. R. Pearce, as he was in 1888.

Then there was Jabez Wolffe, who is, happily, still alive. How desperately and gallantly he tried in vain to conquer the Channel !

Other great swimmers who were personal friends were Agnes Beckwith, who swam continuously for a hundred hours at the Royal Aquarium ; Kenna, who used to jump from a pier in a sack with hands and feet heavily manacled ; Steve Brodie, who swam a hundred and fifty-two miles in six days ; C. W. Houghton, who escaped under water from a locked and roped box ; Alice Sinclair, a famous ' beauty " and the world's champion ornamental swimmer, whom I taught to swim in 1883 ; James Finney, who held the record for swimming one hundred and thirteen yards one foot under water ; and little Tommy Lewis, whom I taught to swim when he was seven years old and who became the Boy Champion of the world.

A real " character " was Professor Redditch, the intrepid diver who used to plunge off Brighton Pier astride a bicycle, leaping clear of the machine in mid-air. I have seen Redditch come home to his old mother with his pockets literally bulging with sovereigns. These he would carelessly pour into her lap with instructions to bank them. He was the most casual man I ever knew, and certainly could never tell you what he was worth.

Another friend, a brave man, was O. Peart, who was killed at Fitzgerald's Circus, Sydney, in 1896. The fatal dive was forty-five feet into three feet of water, the tank being eight feet long by six feet wide. Poor Peart ! He was a fine fatalist, and though he braved death countless times he always knew he would lose in the end. He called the men who dug his tank " The Gravediggers," and told them, if he ever made a mistake, they were not to pull him out but to make the tank his grave. At his fatal dive he merely grazed his abdomen against the edge of the tank, but the nervous shock killed him. He was still alive when assisted from the tank, and even walked to his dressing-room, though a two-inch blue-black band round his stomach told of his injury. He laughed at his fate, and, laying his dying hand on that of the doctor, said : " Fifty degrees below zero ! " Then he smiled at Fitzgerald, squeezed his hand, and died. And this after a miserable little dive of forty-five feet, when he had previously dived the two hundred and twenty-seven feet from Tower Bridge without mishap.

Ben Fuller was another great friend,

famous in his day for his high jumps into water. I remember vividly the occasion when I accompanied him to Bristol, where he intended to jump from the Clifton Suspension Bridge. He chose a foggy evening when there were few people about and no police, which was important! I paid a boatman to stand by to pick him up, but, just as he was about to jump, it occurred to me to make sure that the boatman was at his post. I found him eventually at the local inn, quite incapable, and after much persuasion succeeded in getting Fuller to abandon the project. I was particularly anxious that he should not drown—he owed me eight pounds! But the poor fellow did drown eventually when he jumped from Tower Bridge. Onlookers related how he came to the surface once, brushed a hand wearily across his eyes as though partially stunned, and sank to his death.

Fuller had always been fired with the exploits of Sam Scott, a former champion, who, fifty years previously, had jumped the amazing distance of five hundred and ninety-three feet from a precipice below Niagara Falls! He, too, met his death when he erected a scaffold on Southwark Bridge and accidentally hanged himself while performing acrobatics previous to his dive.

My own aquatic achievements have been largely confined to teaching, but occasionally curious tasks have come my way. Many years ago a very wealthy man had been watching a swimming race at Sunbury, and as he waved his hands excitedly a fifty-pound ring slipped from his finger and fell into the Thames. All the swimmers and boatmen in the vicinity made a hurried search for it without success. Then they wired for me. An hour later I arrived to find the water pitch-black with the disturbed mud. It seemed a hopeless task, but at length I stripped and without the ghost of a hope of finding the ring dived into the eight feet of water. My spring took me to the bottom, I grabbed wildly at a handful of mud—and the ring was in my hand!

SOME years ago I performed all over the country, and I am guiltily proud of the fact that on one occasion I fooled four thousand people. It was at Brighton, where I was due to give an entertainment from Westman's Bathing Cars. I wanted to do something original, and on my way to the show I chanced to pick up a flat piece of red stone which broke in my hand into two exactly similar shapes. This gave me an idea. Handing one of the pieces to a member of the audience gathered on the beach, I asked him to mark it. Then, secretly substituting the other piece, I gave it to a boy to throw a hundred yards out to sea. Then, after pretending to nerve myself for a great feat, I swam under water to the spot where the stone had sunk, and after a minute or two appeared on the surface waving the piece of marked stone that had never left my possession! When I reached the shore the entire audience of four thousand swarmed down in a body and dragged me in triumph to my machine!

Tommy Lewis, "whom I taught to swim when he was seven and who became the Boy Champion of the world."

In the days when swimming galas were more popular than they are to-day, it was the inventive showman who scored. A new feat always attracted. At Wembley Park, where I promoted all the water shows for ten years, freak races were very much in favour. I remember the "Business Man's Handicap," in which the swimmers wore top-hats and frock-coats and carried umbrellas, and that in which the contestants were attired in nightgowns and nightcaps, and carried lighted candles which they had to keep alight throughout the race!

Once at the Richmond Baths I created something of a sensation by playing the entire chorus of "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay" on a tin whistle *under water*. Only my hands and the holes of the whistle were above the surface, a long tube connecting the mouthpiece to my lips. Another feat of which I am rather proud is that of *walking* a length of the bath in two minutes. The difficulty of keeping your feet on the bottom, especially at the deep end, must be attempted to be appreciated. I accomplished this without weights of any kind, by means of a little secret of breathing without which it would have been impossible. One man who saw me do this offered me five pounds if I could get his feet to touch the bottom of the deep end of the bath. I tried for days, pulling him, pushing him, all but sitting on him, but all to no purpose. He was a human

cork! After the highest dives he bobbed up, scarcely breaking the surface, and if you did manage to get him below, as soon as one leg was free up he shot like a released balloon!

Another swimming "stunt" was to dive fully clad to the bottom of the bath, sit on an iron chair, and divest myself of every item of apparel save a bathing costume. A friend of mine used to lie on an iron bedstead beneath the water, coming to the surface for breath only four times in fifteen minutes, an amazing feat.

On one occasion I was giving a display of life-saving and had prepared a tailor's dummy with a very life-like waxen head and a *papier-mâché* body. Judge Geoghan's son was my pupil on that occasion. When I threw the figure into the water everyone thought it was real, and when young Geoghan jumped in prepared to "life-save" the dummy, they all applauded wildly. But, alas! Geoghan was too energetic, and just as he brought the figure to the side he gave too lusty a pull and—off came the head, which Geoghan solemnly laid at the feet of a scandalized old lady beside the bath!

At one of my entertainments I employed Alma Beaumont, the first lady to descend from a balloon in a parachute, and on one of my old bills appears the name of Leon M. Lion, now famous as a theatrical producer, but at that time announced as a twelve-year-old elocutionist "with a promising theatrical future"! I was, moreover, probably the first man to tour the country with a moving picture show. Those early reels gave incidents from Queen Victoria's Jubilee celebrations. After a two months' tour, however, I found that my expenses were exactly equal to my takings, and concluded that the "movies" were decidedly slow! Now, whenever I pass the new Tivoli or the Capitol, I think unprintable things!

Recently I came across a copy of the old *Penny Illustrated Paper*, which contained an account of my own part in the opening of the Bath Club, Dover Street. I remember it well. Mr. Herbert Gladstone was there and other famous figures of Victorian London.

JUST two more stories. When still a minor I entered into a very foolish contract with a well-known entertainer at the Crystal Palace, where I was expected to give three water shows a day for a very low fee. In addition I had to supply my own tank. At last I decided to break the contract, and the problem arose how to remove my tank. It chanced that a new plate of glass had to be inserted, and I seized the opportunity of hiring a van and mounting the tank upon it. At the gates of the Palace a policeman asked for my pass, which, of course, I did not possess. I compromised, however, by taking him to have a drink. There I handed him my change, asking him to look after it for a minute. Then I raced outside, opened the gates, and whipped up the horse that brought my tank to safety!

A certain London Council wished to see me perform before they engaged me, and one night a few members attended the local bath. It was in the days when swimming baths were lit by gas jets, and on this occasion only one, just above the deep end, was alight. When the councillors were all grouped about this light I dived in and quietly swam *under water* the entire length of the bath, and came up unnoticed under the steps at the shallow end, where it was completely dark. There I remained for three or four minutes joyfully watching the now anxious councillors as they peered into the gloomy depths at the other end. Then, still beneath the water, I swam to the spot where I had first entered and came up as fresh as a daisy before their astonished gaze.

Prof. Redditch, who used to plunge off Brighton Pier astride a bicycle, leaping clear of his machine in mid-air.

"Do you mean to say that you have been under all that time?" gasped one of them.

"Well, I've only just come up," I replied with unquestionable truth.

I got the job!

THE LAMP

By

G.R.MALLOCH

Illustrated by
J. DEWAR MILLS

THE scene at the end of the room appeared to Lydia to stand out with the clearness of a stage setting. From the couch by the fire she saw with strange vividness the polished table at which her husband sat, the baby grand piano behind him, and the walnut cupboard which contained her household glass and silver. Behind the table and the piano rose two windows, open on this warm May evening, and exactly between them and behind the chair in which her husband drooped over his meal stood a tall lamp with a black stem carrying a great parchment shade, edged with black and hung with big coloured beads. The lamp dominated the picture: from its mysterious dark-edged shade a soft light fell on the table, on the open piano on which lay the songs she had so often sung to him: the walnut cabinet stood a little outside the circle of light, with just a gleam here and there on its polished doors. She remembered with a curiously disinterested feeling that every article of furniture she could see had been chosen, by her and that man drooping in his chair, with infinite pains and affectionate care. One by one these things had been acquired, as money and opportunity made it possible, for the decoration of the room which had to serve as drawing-room and dining-room: bit by bit the picture of this perfect room, as they had thought it, had been built up. When all was completed, as they at first thought, they had discovered the lamp, and both had exclaimed together that they must have that. And the lamp had been bought and installed in the window: the electrician had laid a cunningly hidden cable to it: it was a tremendous moment when she had switched on the light and called her husband from his room to stand hand-in-hand with her and look at the lovely thing glowing on its pedestal and throwing its soft light on the gleaming furniture. The room of their dreams was at last perfect: they could add nothing to it without spoiling it. They sighed and kissed. From that moment the lamp became the core of the room to them, the secret of its evening beauty when a man came home to his home.

A little cynical smile twisted her lips. It was a beautiful room still, but what indefinable thing had gone out of it? Once she had thrilled every time she entered it, alone or with him. Now it was different.

Why? She asked herself and sighed inwardly that there was no answer to that question. At first it had all been like a dream: she had not missed the gay adventurous life of her set: it had been enough to manage this absurd little flat and look after this man who loved her in such a puzzling fashion. She had laughed at him when he asked her if she did not find life with him dull: the idea had seemed absurd. How absurd! Dull, with their present happiness and all their wonderful plans for the future—dull! His staid relations had seemed infinitely amusing to her: she had scarcely missed the friends who dropped off from her life. She could run in to see her own people when she had time: she had duty visits to pay and this wonderful flat to look after, and the nightly thrill of his return. Why had it all faded?

She looked critically at her husband. He was not the successful man of their dreams. His hair was greying and thinner than it had been three years ago: he no longer carried himself so uprightly: his face was the face of a tired man. He looked pathetically like a dog that had come home after

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being lost. Yet he was still the same kind, sensitive man who loved her. He had not changed inwardly: only his plans had not been fulfilled, their income was still the same, he was still a subordinate in a great business, still a dreamer, still unpractical, still content with what she and this place could give him. Where was the change, then? It must be in herself, she thought.

Her mind ran back to the day when, on one of her shopping expeditions in Kensington, she had met Lilian again. A big shining car had drawn up at the kerb and she had heard her name called.

"Lydia! Lydia!"

She looked round and saw Lilian, beautifully-gowned and smart as ever, laughing at her.

"Jump in beside me this moment, you wretch, and tell me where you have buried yourself with that absurd husband of yours. You of all people, Lydia, to marry and settle down! I simply can't believe it!"

For a moment she felt that she would refuse. But why not? She got into the car and sank back with a pang at her heart. This was the life she had shared with Lilian and the others before John came into the scene. It had been very pleasant: she had just been able to afford it on her little income: now that income went with John's salary to keep their place going.

"My dear," laughed Lilian, as she steered the car dexterously towards Piccadilly, "how you have gone off! Forgive me, but you used to be the smartest of us all, though how you did it on your money I never knew. It's a wicked shame. Do you never go out, and have you abandoned all your friends?"

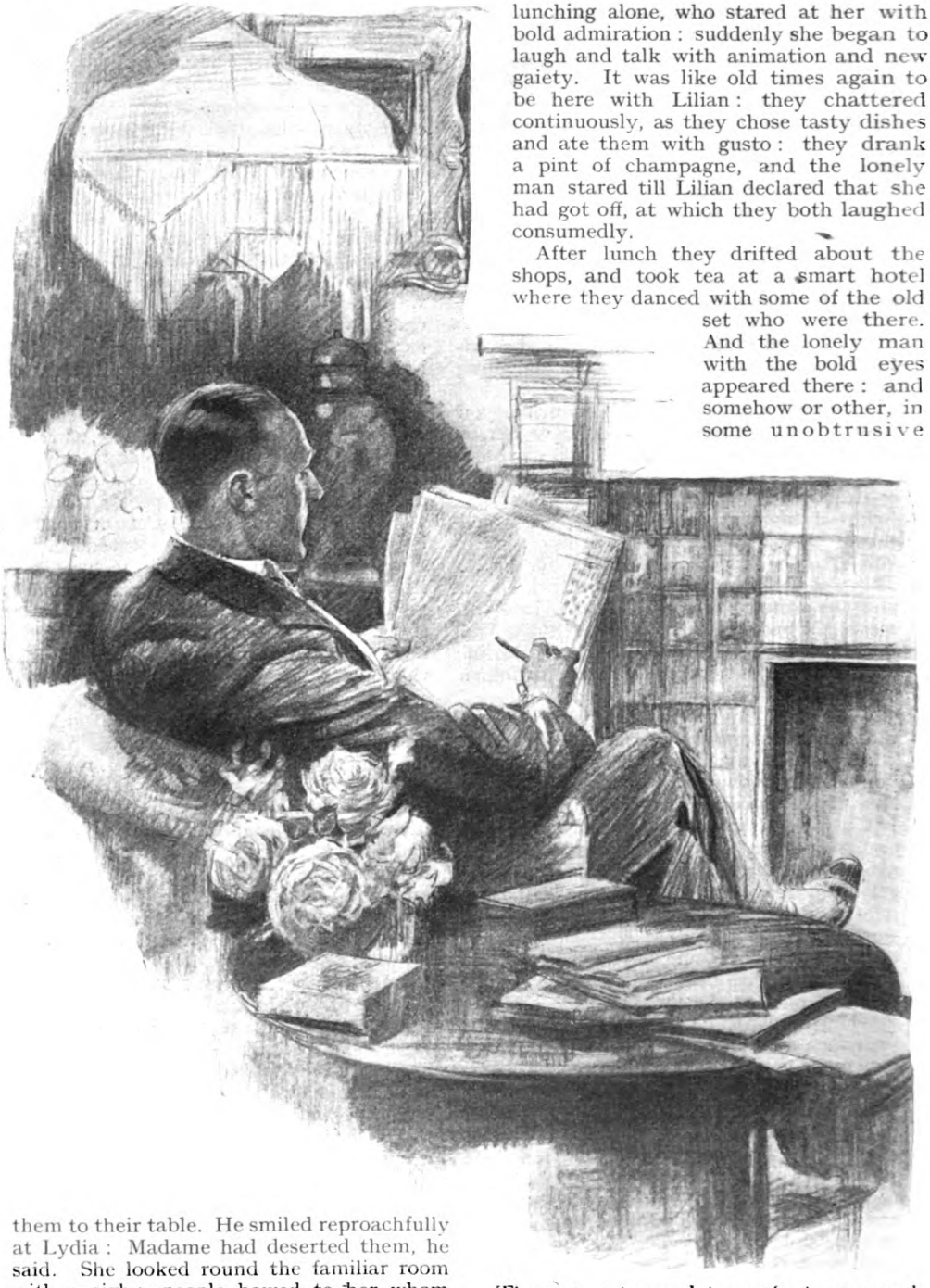
She felt ashamed, and ashamed of being ashamed. It was true that she had gone off, because she couldn't afford to be very smart: it was true that she seldom went out, because they could not afford it. And John hated dance clubs and could only afford pits or circles at the theatre.

"How on earth do you get along without your men?" pursued Lilian. "I can never remember you without some affair on hand, since you were at school. We used to say that you were potty on men. Not that your affairs ever lasted very long. But I can't see, unless you really do take marriage very seriously, what difference it can really make once you have acquired the man habit. You got tired of all your men in time or they got tired of you, but you always got a fresh one. You'll get bored with your husband, too, and then? Do you think you should have married, Lydia, darling? What do you do when men look at you now?"

She made some laughing reply, but something in what Lilian said sank into her. She had always had a man or men running after her, taking her out to dinners, dances, theatres, night clubs, or motoring. She had given up her own car now. Suddenly, for the first time since her marriage she remembered the old challenge of eyes, the interplay of glances, the picked-up acquaintances with men, attractive, handsome, rich men, who sought from her what they could get. They never got much, she saw to that—but there had been perilous moments, exciting moments; the whole of such adventures was exciting till they came to one end or another. That was all over now, and she was glad; for to such a life what was the end, save to grow old, to see all that gay existence dwindling away from her till the loneliness of an old woman without an illusion, without a comrade, fell upon her?

SO she had thought. But now, as the car crawled slowly up Piccadilly and she listened to Lilian's flow of chatter about her doings and the people who used to be her friends too, a faint nostalgia began to stir in her. She loved John, of course she loved John as much as ever. But was she doing John any good by making a hermit of herself as Lilian said she was? She looked at her companion, noting appreciatively all the little touches that made her so perfectly turned out. Was she really growing rusty? Need she really deny herself the fun of that glittering circle in which everyone was gay, irresponsible, out to enjoy life? As Lilian rattled on about her engagements there came into her mind the evening before her: she would go home, see about dinner, change her dress, and wait for John. And John would come in about seven, tired and hungry; he would enjoy his meal and make his usual appreciative remarks about her housekeeping and her appearance. He would not want to go out; but perhaps he would suggest a theatre pit or a cinema, because he feared she might be dull. Or they would sit at home, he quite content to rest and make a little love to her. Lilian never dined at home. Lilian would have a dozen invitations from a dozen men to choose from: she would dine at some smart place, perhaps go to the stalls or a box at the latest play with a laughing company, perhaps dance; certainly her evening, full of light and gaiety, nonsense and epigrams, cocktails and mixed drinks, would not end till an hour when she and John had long been in bed. Well, she could not do that: it was not John's idea of life at all. But she had her days to herself: she might surely see the old lot sometimes?

When they entered the restaurant at which Lilian had elected to lunch, the headwaiter came bustling forward and conducted



They sat at home, John perfectly contented

them to their table. He smiled reproachfully at Lydia: Madame had deserted them, he said. She looked round the familiar room with a sigh: people bowed to her whom she had not seen for ages: others paused at their table for a moment to greet Lilian and to ask where she, Lydia, had been for so long. She sipped her cocktail appreciatively: she caught the eye of a man lunching alone, who stared at her with bold admiration: suddenly she began to laugh and talk with animation and new gaiety. It was like old times again to be here with Lilian: they chattered continuously, as they chose tasty dishes and ate them with gusto: they drank a pint of champagne, and the lonely man stared till Lilian declared that she had got off, at which they both laughed consumedly.

After lunch they drifted about the shops, and took tea at a smart hotel where they danced with some of the old set who were there. And the lonely man with the bold eyes appeared there: and somehow or other, in some unobtrusive way, he was presently speaking to her, and soon she was dancing with him. Lilian took her aside for a moment and whispered: "I see that you have not changed much

after all," and laughed. And suddenly she felt that she had not changed much. John and the life with John in that strange little flat seemed like a vague dream from which she had awakened. She realized at six o'clock that she had to go back to it. How was she to get rid of this man? Did she want to get rid of him? He came with her to the vestibule and wanted to drive her home in his car. And when she refused, he said that it was impossible that they should not meet again—she must lunch with him. As she hesitated, he said he would be waiting for her at this hotel at one o'clock to-morrow. She must come: when she told him that she was afraid she couldn't, he said he would be there on the chance. He looked into her eyes strangely as he bowed deferentially, and she went out into the crowded street, excited and tremulous. She walked for a little, telling herself that she was a fool and that this would not do, but when she climbed into a bus she was thinking of what she could wear if she did go, which of course was nonsense.

and happy, smoking his pipe and reading, she brooding in her chair.

That night at home with John had seemed very flat and dull. He had suggested going out, but what was the use of going out to do any of the old stupid things they did?

They sat at home, John perfectly contented and happy, smoking his pipe and reading, she brooding in her chair. Why not go to-morrow? Why tell John about to-day when he would not understand? And he might be hurt in his silly, sensitive fashion because he could not give her that kind of life on his salary. She yawned a good deal and went to bed early.

NEXT day, at one o'clock, she passed through the swing doors of the Hotel Splendide. And so for many days, always getting back to the flat in time to see about John's dinner, a task that became more and more uninteresting; John was a dear, of course: she still loved him as much as ever, she told herself, indignantly; but, oh, how dull those evenings were after the days with Morton, who had twenty thousand a year: days of lunching, dancing, motoring out into the country to little hotels: at last days when one went to tea at his flat—nothing wrong in that, nothing wrong in that, she said to herself angrily, as if someone had said that there was something very wrong. She could keep a man in his place. If he held her hand, did that mean anything? If he tried to kiss her, even if he succeeded, that was because he was carried away, and he apologized so nicely afterwards. No, there was nothing wrong in it, and to tell John would only make him unhappy.

If John noticed anything, he said nothing. Probably he did not notice anything—he was stupid enough for that. What sort of husband was a man who did not notice anything? she asked herself, accusing John. He had looked at her anxiously once or twice and told her that she was rather flushed and feverish, and asked if she felt quite well. She could have laughed in his face, knowing that the feverishness meant too many cocktails or an extra whisky-and-soda.

Then had come the day when Morton had taken her out into the country to lunch at some new place he had discovered in Sussex; the day on which he had at last broken cover and told her that he loved her desperately, that she was wasting her life, that she was born to be happy and to enjoy the world, and not to make herself a drudge for any man. How understandingly he had explained herself to herself: how she had been carried away by an impulse which she took for love, and how like her generous nature that was: and how convincingly he had shown her that it had all been a mistake, the sort of mistake that only a really fine woman could make. And how true it was that, even if she decided to do what old-fashioned people called her duty and go on living with her husband, she would be deceiving him as much as if she were unfaithful to him.

It was not fair to either her or her husband to pretend to love him when she had ceased to love him. And he hoped he was right—he knew he was right—when he said that he felt sure that she loved him. Morton was sure of that—sure that theirs was a great passion, sure that he could take care of her and that she would never regret giving herself to him. He would provide for her future in the best way they could arrange—and although he had said nothing about marriage, that of course meant marriage.

Well, now as she sat looking at her husband in his chair under the lamp, she asked herself again why had she changed and what was it in these two men that attracted her so much in the one and not in the other. Morton was rich—it could not be that: he was handsome in a dark, insolent fashion: he was understanding and could read her thoughts: wherever they went he commanded attention, other women were obviously jealous of her. She did not pause to ask how much of his attraction lay in the money which enabled him to dress perfectly, to have expensive cars, and to buy the flattery of the world, in which pleasure is an article of commerce and joy is bought and sold. She denied to herself that she had surrendered to a physical attraction only: but she did not know that Morton was a professional pursuer of women and did not guess how many years of practice had gone to make perfect his methods of attaining his end. The man under the lamp, drooping over his meal, the tired, unsuccessful man who could only offer her what was in his heart, seemed to her an unheroic figure. She had made a mistake, that was all: as Morton had explained, it was a crime against her self-respect and against her husband to go on living with him when she had ceased to love him.

But still something stirred uneasily in her. John knew nothing of her affair with Morton. It would come like a thunderclap to him. He had been her lover and she had felt with him something that no one else had been able to waken in her: he was her husband and he worshipped her. She did not want to be cruel to John. But cruelty was often the only real kindness; he would get over it and forget her and marry again some quiet, simple woman who would suit him and his ideas of life.

To-night, breaking their long custom, she was going out alone. She had told him that she was going to a theatre with an old school friend whom she sometimes met.

and he had believed her. Really, she was going straight to Morton's flat; they were motoring to Dover, where they were to spend the night, and they would cross to France in the morning—to France, to Paris, to Italy, to happiness, to a new life free from care and drudgery, to an existence in which the little things of life did not count, to everything that money and what was still left of youth could give them both. Happiness lay before her, happiness in which she would shut her eyes to anything that could trouble the mind: John would divorce her and she would marry Morton, and soon people would forget all about the scandal and they would be received everywhere as if nothing had happened.

She had wanted to leave a letter for John, but Morton laughed her out of anything so old-fashioned. Time enough to write when they were safely away. And so now she was taking her last look at John, sitting there, munching his dinner under the lamp. And the lamp troubled her soul: it was a symbol, she felt, of John and herself and their happy days: the crown and glory of this room of their dreams. It seemed to throw its light on the man and the table like a spot-light on the chief actor on a stage: it seemed to be consciously illuminating not only this moment but a thousand moments she wished to forget.

At last she got up slowly and drew a wrap round her flimsy evening frock.

"It's time for me to go, John," she said nervously. "Don't get up—you're tired. I shall hop on to a bus."

John turned to her and smiled. The smile seemed to light up his tired face; the lamp seemed to concentrate on it with increased brilliancy.

"I hope you'll enjoy yourself, darling," he said. "Give my love to Milly. Sorry I'm not coming with you, but I dare say you'll enjoy a gossip with her better without me. Sure you've got enough money?"

She winced, for she had fifty pounds of Morton's money in her handbag. John looked as though he expected her to kiss him. She moved to the door.

"Plenty, thanks."

"Think of me sometimes," said John, still smiling and looking at her in that irritatingly admiring fashion of his. "I'll wait up for you."

The door closed behind her and John turned to his plate. He sighed, thinking how wonderful it was that Lydia should have chosen him to love and wishing sadly that he had more money to give her.

LYDIA hailed the first taxi she saw and was driven through the May evening along wide streets and through squares heavy with greenery. She breathed in the enchantment of a summer twilight in London, when the sky is still luminous with sunset and lights are beginning to sparkle in windows and on the rushing cars. Her blood seemed to hold a strange fire; she quivered at the thought of what was before her; she felt an immense longing for something she could not define and a pang of fear, a strange corrosive doubt as to what she was doing and what the future held. She shut her eyes and leaned back on the cushions, and immediately she saw the lamp photographed on the blackness. She opened them and it gave her a feeling of relief to see the crowded streets full of people laughing and hurrying to meet lovers or to get away from them.

At Permyn Mansions she was admitted by Morton's man. His master had been called out suddenly and begged that she would wait for him—it was something to do with one of the cars. Would Madame take any refreshment? Lydia had a sudden attack of nerves; she fancied that there was some undercurrent beneath the suave deference of the servant. Yes, she would take a whisky-and-soda. She needed something to steady her. And again as the man poured it out and offered it to her on the silver tray, she thought she detected a vanishing gleam of something in his respectfully lowered eyes. She moved restlessly about the room, lit a cigarette, and tried not to think.

Presently Morton returned, profuse with apologies and explanations. There had been some trouble with the engine of the car they were going in—he had had a devil of a job at the garage to get it fixed in time. Now everything was all right and they could get some dinner. And then he did a subtly flattering thing, flattering because it seemed to be so considerate at such a moment. Would she dine here or would she prefer to go out somewhere. There was food in the flat, he said, but perhaps——

As he had calculated, she dined in the flat. Under the eye of the manservant, their conversation was of ordinary things: the dinner was simple but costly: the wines were equally costly but less simple. After the meal they sat on a lounge, and presently the man served coffee and withdrew. And then Morton made a false move—a surprising one from such an artist.

Perhaps if the dinner had not been very good he might not have done it, Lydia thought; but she also thought that the dinner motive was not so very flattering to her nor quite in keeping with the high plane on which he had hitherto kept his behaviour. Suddenly he took her in his arms and overwhelmed her with kisses; she was stifled and could scarcely resist him. But the thought of the manservant came to her like

She whispered that he must wait, and, as she did so, some sort of fear or uneasiness clutched at her heart.

the touch of an icicle; and suddenly when Morton's red, flushed face was pressed against hers with brutal force and she closed her eyes to avoid seeing it, she saw against the darkness the picture of the lamp, serene and beautiful, its light illuminating with deadly clearness the face she had shut her eyes to avoid. She exerted all her strength and pushed Morton away. He got up, red and angry; then suddenly his features cleared and he was kneeling before her, kissing her hands and making the most beautiful apologies. He looked very handsome and repentant; it was her beauty that had carried him off his feet; he was foolish, perhaps, and she must forgive him. She whispered that he must wait, and, as she did so, some sort of fear or uneasiness clutched at her heart. Behind all that air of force and dominance that had attracted her lay—what? Something very beautiful of which he talked so movingly, or something unbearable, devouring, satiating, exhausting, draining life of its beauty and love of its meaning? She closed her mind to such thoughts. Presently the servant carried his baggage and hers, prepared in this flat days ago, down to the car. They followed and got in. Morton drove and she sat beside him.

There was a strange glow in the sky before them, and presently they found the traffic thickening. Fire engines dashed past, crowds of people surged about, the traffic block became fixed. A man in the crowd told them that a big store was on fire; Morton swore softly, and after some manœuvring got the car into a side-street. It was evident that they must make a wide detour from their proposed route, but that was simple enough, he assured her. Lydia heard and saw all this without quite taking it in she sat absorbed in thoughts that were not altogether comforting. The car swept silently through unfamiliar roads; all that she was conscious of was that it was sweeping her away to something that had become suddenly the unknown, dark, mysterious, terrifying almost.

And then suddenly, as if impelled by a force outside her, she looked up. There was something familiar about this street. With a start she realized that they were passing through her own road—John's road. And, as suddenly, they drew up behind a conglomeration of cars held up before them. She looked out straight into their own ground-floor room, brilliantly lit in the darkness. She could see the familiar things; she could see the lamp, and under the lamp the gleaming table, and at the table the figure of her husband just as she had left him. He had not moved: he had pushed the things aside from him; he sat drooping, staring at the polished wood in front of him. Above his head the lamp shone down with its soft light. How peaceful, how beautiful that room seemed; how tired and sad that man looked; yet there was that old familiar look of some brooding happiness beneath his care-worn appearance. He would wait up for her! What was he thinking about now? Her, probably. He it was who had made life suddenly wonderful for her; he it was, and only he, she realized, it was who could ever make it beautiful again.

With a quick movement she opened the door of the stationary car and slipped out. Morton stared at her in amazement.

"What is it?" he demanded.

"It is good-bye. I am sorry, but it is finally and absolutely good-bye."

"What do you mean?" he gasped, astonished. "Your things are in the car—you can't go off like this!"

"I mean what I say. The things in the car are yours—you paid for them—I never want to see them again."

There was something final about her voice and manner, something that penetrated Morton's self-assurance with the conviction that here he had failed at last. The traffic began to move; he hated a scene; with a smothered curse he pressed the accelerator and followed the moving stream. After all, he tried to console himself, he would have tired of her as he had of all the others. And that was the last he ever saw of her.

LYDIA ran across the pavement and entered the familiar door. Her hands did not tremble as she fitted the key into the lock; she was calm with the calmness of certainty. The little hall seemed to smile a welcome to her; she opened the door of their sitting-room softly, and stood on the threshold looking with greedy eyes at the scene before her.

John looked up with a start.

"Why, Lydia! Didn't you go to the theatre after all, or have I been asleep? Nothing wrong, I hope?"

"Sit still, John, for a moment. I love the picture of you sitting there. This dear room! Milly did not turn up, that was all, and I waited as long as I could bear."

John smiled affectionately.

"I was thinking about us," he said, "and how happy we are in spite of everything."

A mist came in her eyes for a moment and then cleared. The table lay in a pool of light, the silver glistening on the polished wood. The lamp stood serenely beautiful, like the guardian of all those dear things on which its beam fell, illuminating them and all that they symbolized.

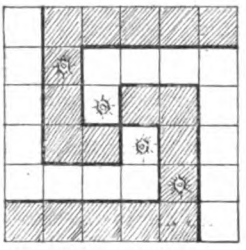
With a little cry she moved swiftly to her real lover and took him in her arms.

PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

871.—THE GRAND LAMA'S PROBLEM.

THE Grand Lama had a chequered board, 6 × 6, set with four jewels as shown in the illustration. This he gave to four persons of his household, provided they could cut the board into four parts each of the same size and shape so that each part should contain a jewel. Our sketch shows how they succeeded. The puzzle I now suggest is to place these four jewels elsewhere, contiguous in a straight line, so that a similar division may be made, equal in size and shape, with a jewel in each piece. The jewels may be set in any row, column, or diagonal, but not anywhere in either of the two *long* diagonals. Where would you set them?



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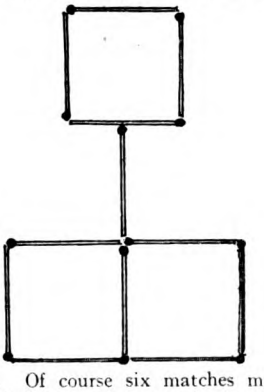

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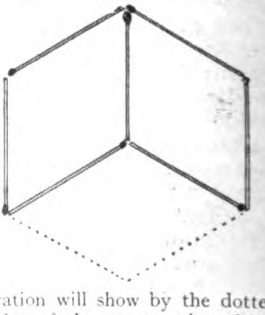

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THE STRAND MAGAZINE

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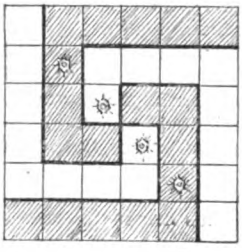

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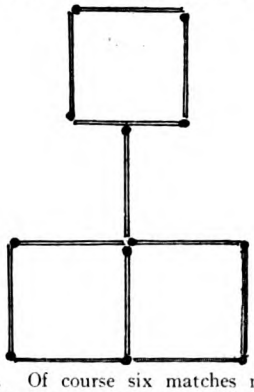

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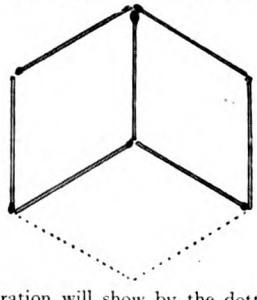

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THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for October, 1927.

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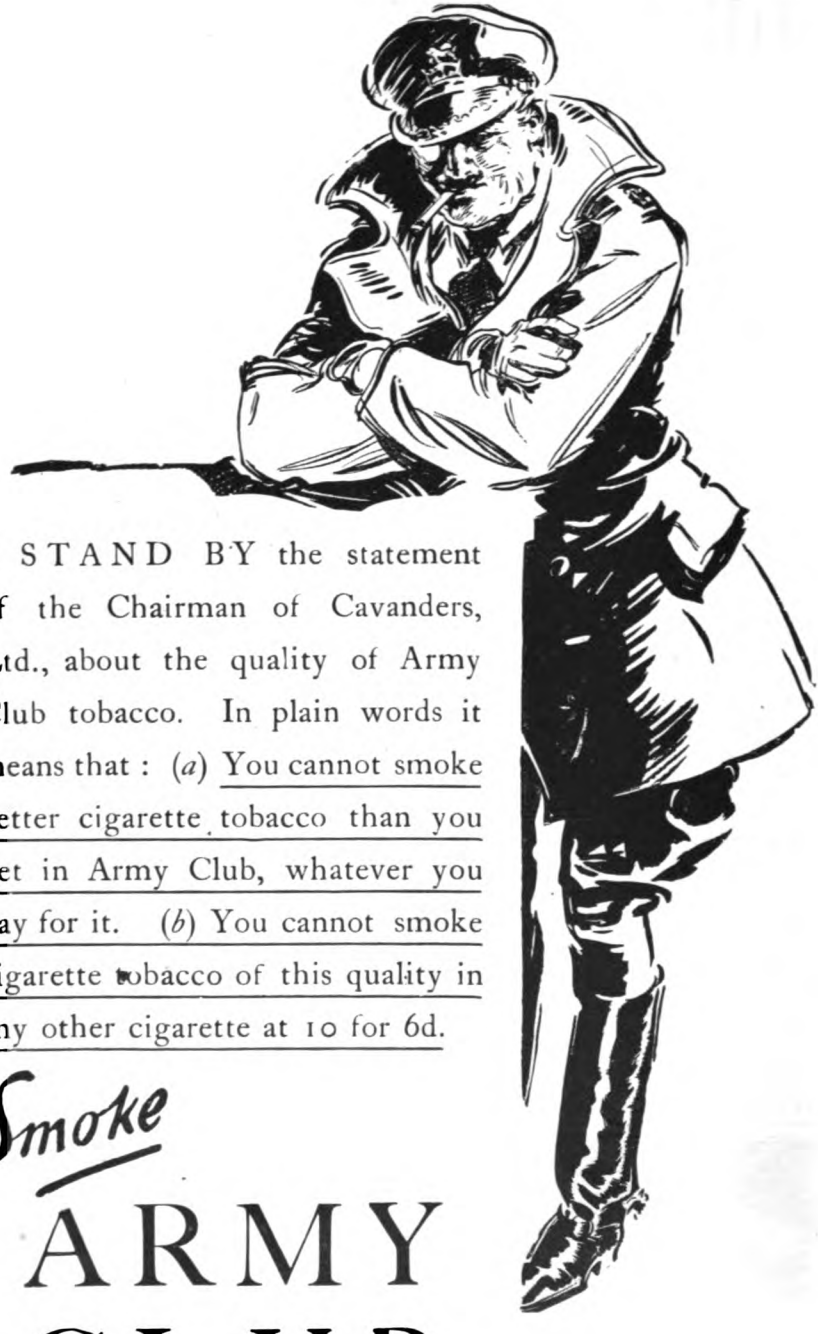

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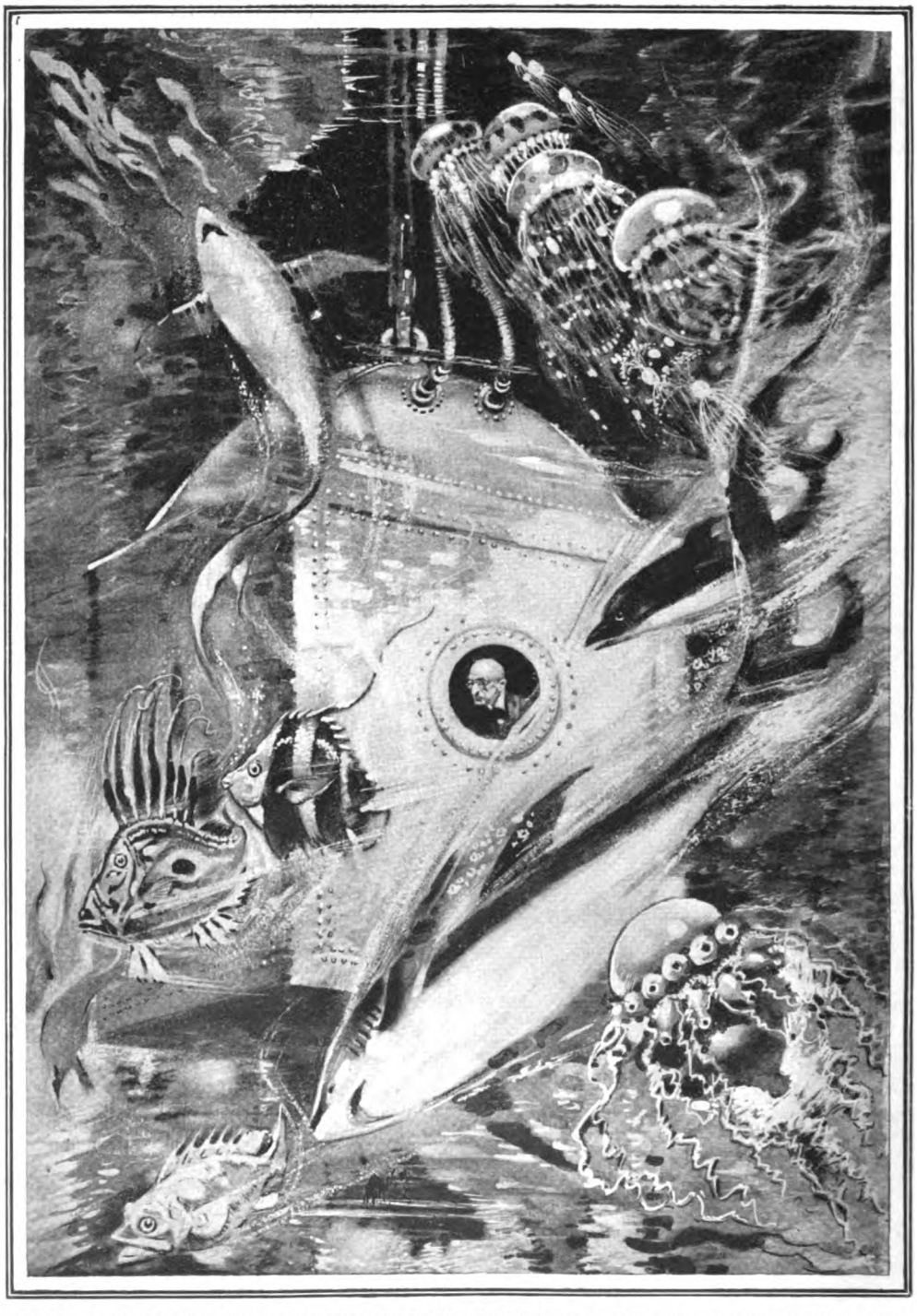

WITH OUR FACES AGAINST THE THICK GLASS, EACH AT OUR OWN PORTHOLE, WE GAZED OUT INTO SUCH A PROSPECT AS MAN HAD NEVER SEEN.

(*See page 331.*)

The MARACOT DEEP: The Lost World under the Sea

By

A. CONAN DOYLE

SINCE these papers have been put into my hands to edit, I will begin by reminding the public of the sad loss of the steamship *Stratford*, which started a year ago upon a voyage for the purpose of oceanography and the study of deep-sea life. The expedition had been organized by Dr. Maracot, the famous author of "Pseudo-Coralline Formations" and "The Morphology of the Lamellibranchs." Dr. Maracot had with him Mr. Cyrus Headley, formerly assistant at the Zoological Institute of Cambridge, Massachusetts, and at the time of the voyage Rhodes Scholar at Oxford. Captain Howie, an experienced navigator, was in charge of the vessel, and there was a crew of twenty-three men, including an American mechanic from the Merribank Works, Philadelphia.

This whole party has utterly disappeared, and the only word ever heard of the ill-fated steamer was from the report of a Norwegian barque which actually saw a ship, closely corresponding with her description, go down in the great gale of the autumn of 1926. A lifeboat marked *Stratford* was found later in the neighbourhood of the tragedy, together with some deck gratings, a lifebuoy, and a spar. This, coupled with the long silence, seemed to make it absolutely sure that the vessel and her crew would never be heard of more. Her fate is rendered more certain by the strange wireless message received at the time, which, though incomprehensible in parts, left little doubt as to the fate of the vessel. This I will quote later.

THERE were some remarkable points about the voyage of the *Stratford* which caused comment at the time. One was the curious secrecy observed by Professor Maracot. He was famous for his dislike and distrust of the Press, but it was pushed to an extreme upon this occasion, when he would neither give information to reporters nor would he permit the representative of any paper to set foot in the vessel during the weeks that it lay in the Albert Dock. There were rumours abroad of some curious and novel construction of the ship which would fit it for deep-sea work, and these rumours were confirmed from the yard of Hunter and Company of West Hartlepool, where the structural changes had actually been carried out. It was at one time said that the whole bottom of the vessel was detachable, a report which attracted the attention of the underwriters at Lloyd's, who were, with some difficulty, satisfied upon the point. The matter was soon forgotten, but it assumes an importance now when the fate of the expedition has been brought once more in so extraordinary a manner to the notice of the public.

SO much for the beginning of the voyage of the *Stratford*. There are now four documents which cover the facts so far as they are known. The first is the letter which was written by Mr. Cyrus Headley, from the capital of the Grand Canary, to his friend, Sir James Talbot, of Trinity College, Oxford, upon the only occasion, so far as is known, when the *Stratford* touched land after leaving the Thames. The second is the strange wireless call to which I have alluded. The third is that portion of the log of the *Arabella Knowles* which deals with the vitreous ball. The fourth and last is the amazing contents of that receptacle, which either represent

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a most cruel and complex mystification, or else open up a fresh chapter in human experience the importance of which cannot be exaggerated. With this preamble I will now give Mr. Headley's letter, which I owe to the courtesy of Sir James Talbot, and which has not previously been published. It is dated October 1st, 1926.

I AM mailing this, my dear Talbot, from Porta de la Luz, where we have put in for a few days of rest. My principal companion in the voyage has been Bill Scanlan, the head mechanic, who as a fellow-countryman, and also as a very entertaining character, has become my natural associate. However, I am alone this morning as he has what he describes as "a date with a skirt." You see, he talks as Englishmen expect every real American to talk. He would be accepted as the true breed. The mere force of suggestion makes me "guess" and "reckon" when I am with my English friends. I feel that they would never really understand that I was a Yankee if I did not. However, I am not on those terms with you, so let me assure you right now that you will not find anything but pure Oxford in the epistle which I am now mailing to you.

You met Maracot at the Mitre, so you know the dry chip of a man that he is. I told you, I think, how he came to pitch upon me for the job. He inquired from old Somerville of the Zoological Institute, who sent him my prize essay on the pelagic crabs, and that did the trick. Of course, it is splendid to be on such a congenial errand, but I wish it wasn't with such an animated mummy as Maracot. He is inhuman in his isolation and his devotion to his work. "The world's stiffest stiff," says Bill Scanlan. And yet you can't but admire such complete devotion. Nothing exists outside his own science. I remember that you laughed when I asked him what I ought to read as a preparation, and he said that for serious study I should read the collected edition of his own works, but for relaxation Haeckel's "Plankton-Studien."

I know him no better now than I did in that little parlour looking out on the Oxford High. He says nothing, and his gaunt, austere face—the face of a Savonarola, or rather, perhaps, of a Torquemada—never relapses into geniality. The long, thin, aggressive nose, the two small gleaming grey eyes set closely together under a thatch of eyebrows, the thin-lipped, compressed mouth, the cheeks worn into hollows by constant thought and ascetic life, are all uncompanionable. He lives on some mental mountain-top, out of reach of ordinary mortals. Sometimes I think he is a little mad. For example, this extraordinary instrument that he has made . . . but I'll tell things in their due order and then you can judge for yourself.

I'll take our voyage from the start. The *Stratford* is a fine seaworthy little boat, specially fitted for her job. She is twelve hundred tons, with clear decks and a good broad beam, furnished with every possible appliance for sounding, trawling, dredging, and tow-netting. She has, of course, powerful steam winches for hauling in the trawls, and a number of other gadgets of various kinds, some of which are familiar enough, and some are strange. Below these are comfortable quarters with a well-fitted laboratory for our special studies.

We had the reputation of being a mystery ship before we started, and I soon found that it was not undeserved. Our first proceedings were commonplace enough. We took a turn up the North Sea and dropped our trawls for a scrape or two, but as the average depth is not much over sixty feet and we were specially fitted for very deep sea work, it seemed rather a waste of time. Anyhow, save for familiar table fish, dogfish, squids, jellyfish, and some terrigenous bottom deposits of the usual alluvial claymud, we got nothing worth writing home about. Then we rounded Scotland, sighted the Faroes, and came down the Wyville-Thomson Ridge, where we had better luck. Thence we worked South to our proper cruising-ground, which was between the African coast and these islands. We nearly grounded on Fuert-Eventura one moonless night, but save for that our voyage was uneventful.

During these first weeks I tried to make friends with Maracot, but it was not easy work. First of all, he is the most absorbed and absent-minded man in the world. You will remember how you smiled when he gave the elevator boy a penny under the impression that he was in a street car. Half the time he is utterly lost in his thoughts, and seems hardly aware of where he is or what he is doing. Then in the second place he is secretive to the last degree. He is continually working at papers and charts, which he shuffles away when I happen to enter the cabin. It is my firm belief that the man has some secret project in his mind, but that so long as we are due to touch at any port he will keep it to himself. That is the impression which I have received, and I find that Bill Scanlan is of the same opinion.

"Say, Mr. Headley," said he one evening, when I was seated in the laboratory testing out the salinity of samples from our hydrographic soundings, "what d'you figure

out that this guy has in his mind? What d'you reckon that he means to do?"

"I suppose," said I, "that we shall do what the *Challenger* and a dozen other exploring ships have done before us, and add a few more species to the list of fish and a few more entries to the bathymetric chart."

"Not on your life," said he. "If that's your opinion you've got to guess again. First of all, what am I here for, anyhow?"

"In case the machinery goes wrong," I hazarded.

"Machinery nothing! The ship's machinery is in charge of MacLaren, the Scotch engineer. No, sir, it wasn't to run a donkey-engine that the Merribank folk sent out their star performer. If I pull down fifty bucks a week it's not for nix. Come here, and I'll make you wise to it."

He took a key from his pocket and opened a door at the back of the laboratory which led us down a companion ladder to a section of the hold which was cleared right across save for four large glittering objects half-exposed amid the straw of their huge packing-cases. They were flat sheets of steel with elaborate bolts and rivets along the edges. Each sheet was about ten foot square and an inch and a half thick, with a circular gap of eighteen inches in the middle.

"What in thunder is it?" I asked.

Bill Scanlan's queer face—he looks halfway between a vaudeville comic and a prize-fighter—broke into a grin at my astonishment.

"That's my baby, sir," he quoted. "Yes, Mr. Headley, that's what I am here for. There is a steel bottom to the thing. It's in that big case yonder. Then there is a top, kind of arched, and a great ring for a chain or rope. Now, look here at the bottom of the ship."

There was a square wooden platform there, with projecting screws at each corner which showed that it was detachable.

"There is a double bottom," said Scanlan. "It may be that this guy is clean loco, or it may be that he has more in his block than we know, but if I read him right he means to build up a kind of room—the windows are in storage here—and lower it through the bottom of the ship. He's got electric searchlights here, and I allow that he plans to shine 'em through the round portholes and see what's goin' on around."

"He could have put a crystal sheet into the ship, like the Catalina Island boats, if that was all that was in his mind," said I.

"You've said a mouthful," said Bill Scanlan, scratching his head. "I can't figger it out nohow. The only one sure thing is, that I've been sent to be under his orders and to help him with the darn fool thing all I can. He has said nothin' up to now, so I've said the same, but I'll just snoop around, and if I wait long enough I'll learn all there is to know."

SO that was how I first got on to the edge of our mystery. We ran into some dirty weather after that, and then we got to work doing some deep-sea trawling northwest of Cape Juba, just outside the Continental Slope, and taking temperature readings and salinity records. It's a sporting proposition, this deep-sea dragging with a Peterson otter trawl gaping twenty foot wide for everything that comes its way—sometimes down a quarter of a mile and bringing up one lot of fish, sometimes half a mile and quite a different lot, every stratum of ocean with its own inhabitants as separate as so many continents. Sometimes from the bottom we would just bring up half a ton of clear pink jelly, the raw material of life, or, maybe, it would be a scoop of pteropod ooze, breaking up under the microscope into millions of tiny round reticulated balls with amorphous mud between. I won't bore you with all the brotulids and macrurids, the ascidians and holothurians, and polyzoa and echinoderms—anyhow, you can reckon that there is a great harvest in the sea, and that we have been diligent reapers. But always I had the same feeling that the heart of Maracot was not in the job, and that other plans were in that queer high, narrow Egyptian mummy of a head. It all seemed to me to be a try-out of men and things until the real business got going.

I had got as far as this in my letter when I went ashore to have a last stretch, for we sail in the early morning. It's as well, perhaps, that I did go, for there was no end of a barney going on upon the pier, with Maracot and Bill Scanlan right in the heart of it. Bill is a bit of a scrapper, and has what he calls a mean wallop in both mitts, but with half-a-dozen Dagoes with knives all round them things looked ugly, and it was time that I butted in. It seems that the Doctor had hired one of the things they call cabs, and had driven half over the island inspecting the geology, but had clean forgotten that he had no money on him. When it came to paying, he could not make these country hicks understand, and the cabman had grabbed his watch so as to make sure. That brought Bill Scanlan into action, and they would have both been on the floor with their backs like pincushions if I had not squared the matter up with a dollar or two over for the driver and a five-dollar bonus for the chap with the mouse under his eye. So all ended well, and Maracot was more human than ever I saw him yet. When we got to the ship he called me into the little

cabin which he reserves for himself and he thanked me.

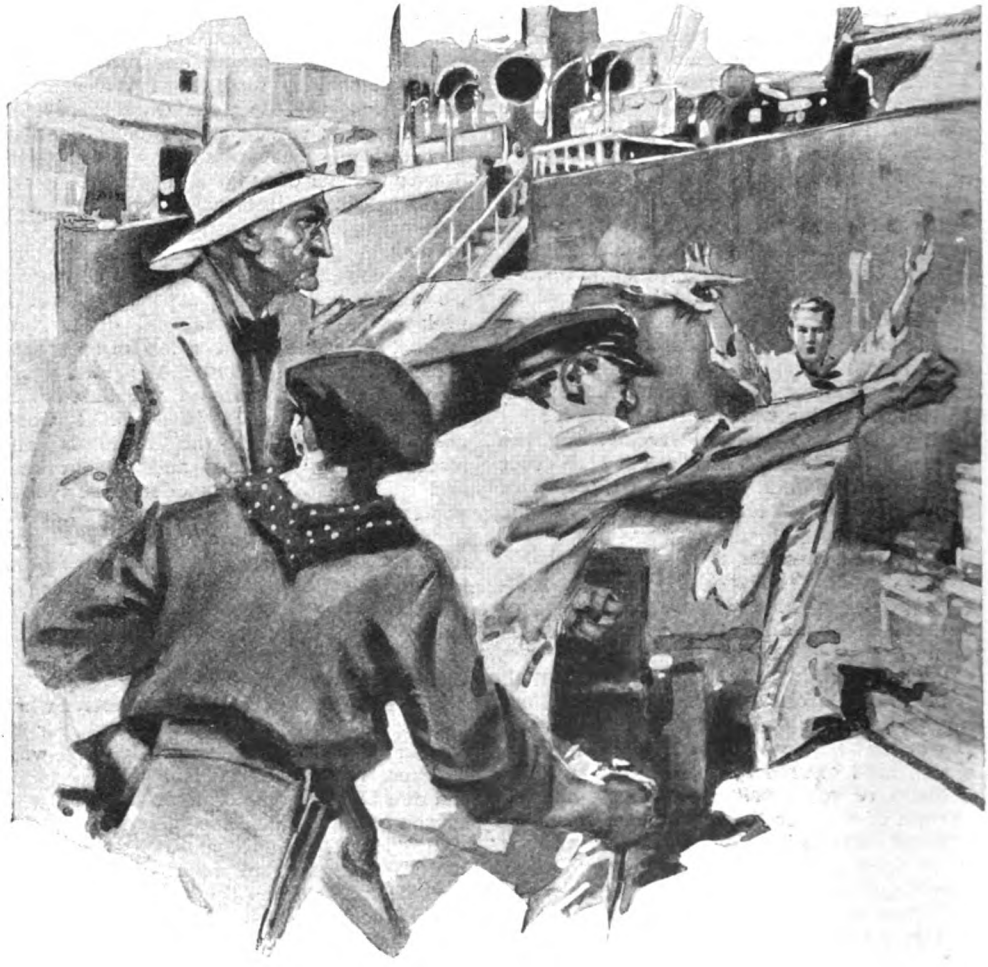
" By the way, Mr. Headley," he said, " I understand that you are not a married man ? "

" No," said I. " I am not."

" No one depending upon you ? "

" No."

" Good ! " said he. " I have not spoken of the object of this voyage because I have, for my own reasons, desired it to be secret. One of those reasons was that I feared to be forestalled. When scientific plans get about one may be served as Scott was served by Amundsen. Had Scott kept his counsel as I have done, it would be he and not Amundsen who would have been the first at the South Pole. For my part, I have quite as important a destination as the South Pole, and so I have been silent. But now we are on the eve of our great adventure and no rival has time to steal my plans. To-morrow we start for our real goal."



Bill is a bit of a scrapper, and has what he calls a mean wallop them things looked ugly, and

' And what is that ? " I asked.

He leaned forward, his ascetic face all lit up with the enthusiasm of the fanatic.

" Our goal," said he, " is the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean."

And right here I ought to stop, for I expect it has taken away your breath as it did mine. If I were a story-writer, I guess I should leave it at that. But as I am just a chronicler of what occurred, I may tell you that I stayed another hour in the cabin of old

man Maracot, and that I learned a lot which there is still just time for me to tell you before the last shore boat leaves.

"Yes, young man," said he, "you may write freely now, for by the time your letter reaches England we shall have made the plunge."

This started him sniggering, for he has a queer dry sense of humour of his own.

"Yes, sir, the plunge is the right word on this occasion, a plunge which will be historic in the annals of Science. Let me tell you, in the first place, that I am well convinced that the current doctrine as to the extreme pressure of the ocean at great depths is entirely misleading. It is perfectly clear that other factors exist which neutralize the effect, though I am not yet prepared to say what those factors may be. That is one of the problems which we may settle. Now, what pressure, may I ask, have you been led to expect under a mile of water?" He glowered at me through his big horn spectacles.

"Not less than a ton to the square inch," I answered. "Surely that has been clearly shown."

"The task of the pioneer has always been to disprove the thing which has been clearly shown. Use your brains, young man. You have been for the last month fishing up some of the most delicate Bathic forms of life, creatures so delicate

in both mitts, but with half-a-dozen Dagoes with knives all round it was time that I butted in.

that you could hardly transfer them from the net to the tank without marring their sensitive shapes. Did you find that there was evidence upon them of this extreme pressure ? "

" The pressure," said I, " equalized itself. It was the same within as without."

" Words—mere words ! " he cried, shaking his lean head impatiently. " You have brought up round fish, such fish as Gastrostomus globulus. Would they not have been squeezed flat had the pressure been as you imagine ? Or look at our otter-boards. They are not squeezed together at the mouth of the trawl."

" But the experience of divers ? "

" Certainly it holds good up to a point. They do find a sufficient increase of pressure to influence what is perhaps the most sensitive organ of the body, the interior of the ear. But as I plan it, we shall not be exposed to any pressure at all. We shall be lowered in a steel cage with crystal windows on each side for observation. If the pressure is not strong enough to break in an inch and a half of toughened double-nickelled steel, then it cannot hurt us. It is an extension of the experiment of the Williamson Brothers at Nassau, with which no doubt you are familiar. If my calculation is wrong—well, you say that no one is dependent upon you. We shall die in a great adventure. Of course, if you would rather stand clear, I can go alone."

It seemed to me the maddest kind of scheme, and yet you know how difficult it is to refuse a dare. I played for time while I thought it over.

" How deep do you propose to go, sir ? " I asked.

He had a chart pinned upon the table, and he placed the end of his compasses upon a point which lies to the south-west of the Canaries.

" Last year I did some sounding in this part," said he. " There is a pit of great depth. We got twenty-five thousand feet there. I was the first to report it. Indeed, I trust that you will find it on the charts of the future as the ' Maracot Deep.' "

" But, good God, sir ! " I cried, " you don't propose to descend into an abyss like that ? "

" No, no," he answered, smiling. " Neither our lowering chain nor our air tubes reach beyond half a mile. But I was going to explain to you that round this deep crevasse, which has no doubt been formed by volcanic forces long ago, there is a raised ridge or narrow plateau, which is not more than three hundred fathoms under the surface."

" Three hundred fathoms ! A third of a mile ! "

" Yes, roughly a third of a mile. It is my present intention that we shall be lowered in our little pressure-proof look-out station on to this submarine bank. There we shall make such observations as we can. A speaking-tube will connect us with the ship so that we can give our directions. There should be no difficulty in the matter. When we wish to be hauled up we have only to say so."

" And the air ? "

" Will be pumped down to us."

" But it will be pitch-dark."

" That, I fear, is undoubtedly true. The experiments of Fol and Sarasin at the Lake of Geneva show that even the ultra-violet rays are absent at that depth. But does it matter ? We shall be provided with the powerful electric illumination from the ship's engines, supplemented by six two-volt Hellesens dry cells connected together so as to give a current of twelve volts. That, with a Lucas Army signalling lamp as a movable reflector, should serve our turn. Any other difficulties ? "

" If our air lines tangle ? "

" They won't tangle. And as a reserve we have compressed air in tubes which would last us twenty-four hours. Well, have I satisfied you ? Will you come ? "

IT was not an easy decision. The brain works quickly and imagination is a mighty vivid thing. I seemed to realize that black box down in the primeval depths, to feel the foul twice-breathed air, and then to see the walls sagging, bulging inwards, rending at the joints with the water spouting in at every rivet-hole and crevice and crawling up from below. It was a slow, dreadful death to die. But I looked up, and there were the old man's fiery eyes fixed upon me with the exaltation of a martyr to Science. It's catching, that sort of enthusiasm, and if it be crazy, it is at least noble and unselfish. I caught fire from his great flame, and I sprang to my feet with my hand out.

" Doctor, I'm with you to the end," said I.

" I knew it," said he. " It was not for your smattering of learning that I picked you, my young friend, nor," he added, smiling, " for your intimate acquaintance with the pelagic crabs. There are other qualities which may be more immediately useful, and they are loyalty and courage."

So with that little bit of sugar I was dismissed, with my future pledged and my whole scheme of life in ruins. Well, the last shore boat is leaving. They are calling for the mail. You will either not hear from me again, my dear Talbot, or you will get a letter worth reading. If you don't hear you can have a floating headstone and drop it somewhere south of the Canaries with the

inscription, "Here, or Hereabouts, lies all that the fishes have left of my friend,
"CYRUS J. HEADLEY."

The second document in the case is the unintelligible wireless message which was

Headley, Scanlan. Situation incomprehensible. Headley handkerchief end of deep sea sounding wire. God help us!
"S.S. STRATFORD."

This was the last, incoherent message

"Last year I did some sounding in this part," said Dr. Maracot. "We got 25,000 feet there." "But, good God, sir!" I cried, "you don't propose to descend into an abyss like that?"

intercepted by several vessels, including the Royal Mail steamer *Arroya*. It was received at 3 p.m. October 3rd, 1926, which shows that it was dispatched only two days after the *Stratford* left the Grand Canary, as shown in the previous letter, and it corresponds roughly with the time when the Norwegian barque saw a steamer founder in a cyclone two hundred miles to the south-west of Porta de la Luz. It ran thus:—

"Blown on our beam ends. Fear position hopeless. Have already lost Maracot,

which came from the ill-fated vessel, and part of it was so strange that it was put down to delirium on the part of the operator. It seemed, however, to leave no doubt as to the fate of the ship.

The explanation—if it can be accepted as an explanation—of the matter is to be found in the narrative concealed inside the vitreous ball, and first it would be as well to amplify the very brief account which has hitherto appeared in the Press of the finding of the ball. I take it verbatim from the log of the *Arabella Knowles*, master Amos Green,

outward bound with coals from Cardiff to Buenos Aires:—

"Wednesday, Jan. 5th, 1927. Lat. 27.14, Long. 28 West. Calm weather. Blue sky with low banks of cirrus clouds. Sea like glass. At two bells of the middle watch the first officer reported that he had seen a shining object bound high out of the sea, and then fall back into it. His first impression was that it was some strange fish, but on examination with his glasses he observed that it was a silvery globe, or ball, which was so light that it lay, rather than floated, on the surface of the water. I was called and saw it, as large as a football, gleaming brightly about half a mile off on our starboard beam. I stopped the engines and called away the quarter-boat under the second mate, who picked the thing up and brought it aboard.

"On examination it proved to be a ball made of some sort of very tough glass, and filled with a substance so light that when it was tossed in the air it wavered about like a child's balloon. It was nearly transparent, and we could see what looked like a roll of paper inside it. The material was so tough, however, that we had the greatest possible difficulty in breaking the ball open and getting at the contents. A hammer would not crack it, and it was only when the chief engineer nipped it in the throw of the engine that we were able to smash it. Then I am sorry to say that it dissolved into sparkling dust, so that it was impossible to collect any good-sized piece for examination. We got the paper, however, and, having examined it and concluded that it was of great importance, we laid it aside with the intention of handing it over to the British Consul when we reached the Plate River. Man and boy, I have been at sea for five-and-thirty years, but this is the strangest thing that ever befell me, and so says every man aboard this ship. I leave the meaning of it all to wiser heads than mine."

So much for the genesis of the narrative of Cyrus J. Headley, which we will now give exactly as written:—

WHOM am I writing to? Well, I suppose I may say to the whole wide world, but as that is rather a vague address I'll aim at my friend Sir James Talbot, of Oxford University, for the reason that my last letter was to him and this may be regarded as a continuation. I expect the odds are a hundred to one that this ball, even if it should see the light of day and not be gulped by a shark in passing, will toss about on the waves and never catch the eye of the passing sailor, and yet it's worth trying, and Maracot is sending up another, so, between us, it may be that we shall get our wonderful story to the world. Whether the world will believe it is another matter, I guess, but when folk look at the ball with its vitrine cover and note its contents of levigen gas, they will surely see for themselves that there is something here that is out of the ordinary. You at any rate, Talbot, will not throw it aside unread.

If anyone wants to know how the thing began, and what we were trying to do, he can find it all in a letter I wrote you on October 1st last year, the night before we left Porta de la Luz. By George! If I had known what was in store for us, I think I should have sneaked into a shore boat that night. And yet—well, maybe, even with my eyes open I would have stood by the Doctor and seen it through. On second thoughts I have not a doubt that I would.

Well, starting from the day that we left Grand Canary I will carry on with my experiences.

The moment we were clear of the port, old man Maracot fairly broke into flames. The time for action had come at last and all the damped-down energy of the man came flaring up. I tell you he took hold of that ship and of everyone and everything in it, and bent it all to his will. The dry, creaking, absent-minded scholar had suddenly vanished, and instead there emerged a human electrical machine, crackling with vitality and quivering from the great driving force within. His eyes gleamed behind his glasses like flames in a lantern. He seemed to be everywhere at once, working out distances on his chart, comparing reckonings with the skipper, driving Bill Scanlan along, setting me on to a hundred odd jobs, but it was all full of method and with a definite end. He developed an unexpected knowledge of electricity and of mechanics and spent much of his time working at the machinery which Scanlan, under his supervision, was now carefully piecing together.

"Say, Mr. Headley, it's just dandy," said Bill, on the morning of the second day. "Come in here and have a look. The Doc. is a regular fellow and a whale of a slick mechanic."

I had a most unpleasant impression that it was my own coffin at which I was gazing, but, even so, I had to admit that it was a very adequate mausoleum. The floor had been clamped to the four steel walls, and the porthole windows screwed into the centre of each. A small trap door at the top gave

The quarter-boat, under the second mate, picked the thing up and brought it aboard.

admission, and there was a second one at the base. The steel cage was supported by a thin but very powerful steel hawser, which ran over a drum, and was paid out or rolled in by the strong engine which we used for our deep-sea trawls. The hawser, as I understood, was nearly half a mile in length, the slack of it coiled round bollards on the deck. The rubber breathing-tubes were of the same length, and the telephone wire was connected with them, and also the wire by which the electric lights within could be operated from the ship's batteries, though we had an independent instalment as well.

It was on the evening of that day that the engines were stopped. The glass was low, and a thick black cloud rising upon the horizon gave warning of coming trouble. The only ship in sight was a barque flying the Norwegian colours, and we observed that it was reefed down, as if expecting trouble. For the moment, however, all was propitious and the *Stratford* rolled gently upon a deep blue ocean, white-capped here and there from the breath of the trade wind. Bill Scanlan came to me in my laboratory with more show of excitement than his easy-going temperament had ever permitted him to show.

"Look it here, Mr. Headley," said he; "they've lowered that contraption into a well in the bottom of the ship. D'you figure that the Boss is going down in it?"

"Certain sure, Bill. And I am going with him."

"Well, well, you are sure bughouse, the two of you, to think of such a thing. But I'd feel a cheap skate if I let you go alone."

"It is no business of yours, Bill."

"Well, I just feel that it is. Sure, I'd be as yellow as a Chink with the jaundice if I let you go alone. Merribanks sent me here to look after the machinery, and if the machinery is down at the bottom of the sea, then it's a sure thing that it's me for the bottom. Where those steel castings are—that's the address of Bill Scanlan—whether the folk round him are crazy or no." It was useless to argue with him, so one more was added to our little suicide club and we just waited for our orders.

ALL night they were hard at work upon the fittings, and it was after an early breakfast that we descended into the hold ready for our adventure. The steel cage had been half lowered into the false bottom, and we now descended one by one through the upper trap-door, which was closed and screwed down behind us, Captain Howie with a most lugubrious face having shaken hands with each of us as we passed him. We were then lowered a few more feet, the shutter drawn above our heads, and the water admitted to test how far we were really seaworthy. The cage stood the trial well, every joint fitted exactly, and there was no sign of any leakage. Then the lower flap in the hold was loosened and we hung suspended in the ocean beneath the level of the keel.

It was really a very snug little room, and I marvelled at the skill and foresight with which everything had been arranged. The electric illumination had not been turned on, but the semi-tropical sun shone brightly through the bottle-green water at either porthole. Some small fish were flickering here and there, streaks of silver against the green background. Inside there was a settee round the little room, with a bathymetric dial, a thermometer, and other instruments ranged above it. Beneath the settee was a row of pipes which represented our reserve supply of compressed air in case the tubes should fail us. Those tubes opened out above our heads, and the telephonic apparatus hung beside them. We could all hear the mournful voice of the captain outside.

"Are you really determined to go?" he asked.

"We are quite all right," the Doctor answered, impatiently. "You will lower slowly and have someone at the receiver all the time. I will report conditions. When we reach the bottom, remain as you are until I give instructions. It will not do to put too much strain upon the hawser, but a slow movement of a couple of knots an hour should be well within its strength. And now 'Lower away!'"

He yelled out the two words with the scream of a lunatic. It was the supreme moment of his life, the fruition of all his brooding dreams. For an instant I was shaken by the thought that we were really in the power of a cunning, plausible monomaniac. Bill Scanlan had the same thought, for he looked across at me with a rueful grin and touched his forehead. But after that one wild outburst our leader was instantly his sober, self-contained self once more. Indeed, one had but to look at the order and forethought which showed itself in every detail around us to be reassured as to the power of his mind.

But now all our attention was diverted to the wonderful new experience which every instant was providing. Slowly the cage was sinking into the depths of the ocean. Light green water turned to dark olive. That again deepened into a wonderful blue, a rich deep blue gradually thickening to a dusky purple. Lower and lower we sank—a hundred feet, two hundred, three hundred. The valves were acting to perfection. Our breathing was as free and natural as upon the deck of the vessel. Slowly the bathymeter needle moved round the luminous dial. Four hundred, five hundred, six hundred. "How are you?" roared an anxious voice from above us.

"Nothing could be better," cried Maracot in reply. But the light was failing. There was now only a dim grey twilight which rapidly changed to utter darkness. "Stop her!" shouted our leader. We ceased to move and hung suspended at seven hundred feet below the surface of the ocean. I heard the click of the switch, and the next instant we were flooded with glorious

golden light which poured out through each of our side windows and sent long glimmering vistas into the waste of waters round us. With our faces against the thick glass, each at our own porthole, we gazed out into such a prospect as man had never seen.

Up to now we had known these strata by the sight of the few fish which had been too slow to avoid our clumsy trawl, or too stupid to escape a drag-net. Now we saw the wonderful world of water as it really was. If the object of creation was the production of man it is strange that the ocean is so much more populous than the land. Broadway on a Saturday night, Lombard Street on a weekday afternoon, are not more crowded than the great sea spaces which lay before us. We had passed those surface strata where fish are either colourless or of the true maritime tints of ultramarine above and silver below. Here there were creatures of every conceivable tint and form which pelagic life can show. Delicate leptocephali or eel larva shot like streaks of burnished silver across the tunnel of radiance. The slow snake-like form of muroena, the deep-sea lamprey, writhed and twisted by, or the black ceratia, all spikes and mouth, gaped foolishly back at our peering faces. Sometimes it was the squat cuttle-fish which drifted across and glanced at us with human sinister eyes; sometimes it was some crystal-clear pelagic form of life, cystoma or glaucus, which lent a flower-like charm to the scene. One huge caranx, or horse mackerel, butted savagely again and again against our window until the dark shadow of a seven-foot shark came across him, and he vanished into the gaping jaws. Dr. Maracot sat entranced, his notebook upon his knee, scribbling down his observations and keeping up a muttered monologue of scientific comment. "What's that? What's that?" I would hear. "Yes, yes, Chimoera mirabilis as taken by the Michael Sars. Dear me, there is lepidion, but a new species as I should judge. Observe that macrurus, Mr. Headley; its colouring is quite different to what we get in the net." Once only was he taken quite aback. It was when a long oval object shot with great speed past his window from above, and left a vibrating tail behind it which extended as far as we could see above us and below. I admit that I was as puzzled for the moment as the Doctor, and it was Bill Scanlan who solved the mystery.

"I guess that boob, John Sweeney, has heaved his lead alongside of us. Kind of a joke, maybe, to prevent us from feeling lonesome."

"To be sure! To be sure!" said Maracot, sniggering. "Plumbus longicaudatus—a new genus, Mr. Headley, with a piano-wire tail and lead in its nose. But, indeed, it is very necessary they should take soundings so as to keep above the bank, which is circumscribed in size. All well, Captain!" he shouted. "You may drop us down."

AND down we went. Dr. Maracot turned off the electric light and all was pitch-darkness once more save for the bathymeter's luminous face, which ticked off our steady fall. There was a gentle sway, but otherwise we were hardly conscious of any motion. Only that moving hand upon the dial told us of our terrific, our inconceivable, position. Now we were at the thousand-foot level, and the air had become distinctly foul. Scanlan oiled the valve of the discharge tube and things were better. At fifteen hundred feet we stopped and swung in mid-ocean with our lights blazing once more. Some great dark mass passed us here, but whether swordfish or deep-sea shark, or monster of unknown breed, was more than we could determine. The Doctor hurriedly turned off the lights. "There lies our chief danger," said he; "there are creatures in the deep before whose charge this steel-plated room would have as much chance as a beehive before the rush of a rhinoceros."

"Whales, maybe," said Scanlan.

"Whales may sound to a great depth," the savant answered. "A Greenland whale has been known to take out nearly a mile of line in a perpendicular dive. But unless hurt or badly frightened, no whale would descend so low. It may have been a giant squid. They are found at every level."

"Well, I guess squids are too soft to hurt us. The laugh would be with the squid if he could claw a hole in Merribanks' nickel steel."

"Their bodies may be soft," the Professor answered, "but the beak of a large squid would sheer through a bar of iron, and one peck of that beak might go through these inch-thick windows as if they were parchment."

"Gee Whittaker!" cried Bill, as we resumed our downward journey.

And then at last, quite softly and gently, we came to rest. So delicate was the impact that we should hardly have known of it had it not been that the light when turned on showed great coils of the hawser all around us. The wire was a danger to our breathing tubes, for it might foul them, and at the urgent cry of Maracot it was pulled taut from above once more. The dial marked eighteen hundred feet. We lay motionless on a volcanic ridge at the bottom of the Atlantic.

(Another long and thrilling instalment next month.)

The Heiress

By

FRANK SWINNERTON

Illustrated by
P. B. HICKLING

I.

"BILL," said Aunt Gertrude, sharply; "it's time you did something."

Bill, rather startled, looked up from his sausages and bacon as if he had bitten on a bone.

"My dear Auntie!" he murmured. "How explosive you are!"

"An idle man," proceeded Aunt Gertrude, "is an unhappy man."

She did her best to look stern as she said this, by frowning and compressing her lips into a thin line. But nothing could make Aunt Gertrude look really stern. She had such white hair, and such a kind, placid face, that sternness was outside her range. Even the far-roaming stranger cats that came into the garden knew that when Aunt Gertrude said "Shoo! Be off!" they had only to advance towards her, arching their backs and waving their tails, to obtain saucers of milk and scraps of meat. So Bill was not in the least impressed by Aunt Gertrude's sternness.

"As far as I'm concerned," he observed at once, "I don't believe it. What you said about idleness. I'm not unhappy. Far from it."

"Then you *ought* to be!" declared Aunt Gertrude.

"I've tried to work. I've given my valuable time to several unappreciative employers. I have revolutionized their businesses; and at the last moment their nerve has failed."

"Quite natural," said Aunt Gertrude. "But very unfair."

"I've offered to manage your own financial arrangements, Auntie."

"My dear Bill, I really wouldn't dream——"

"You see," interrupted Bill, sadly, "you don't trust me."

"I wouldn't dream of troubling you."

There was silence. Bill's eye returned to his sausages and bacon. He started with delight at finding them still there, unspoilt by this disagreeable topic, and was resuming his breakfast when Aunt Gertrude began again. Groaning, Bill looked at her disconsolately. He was a very tall young man, with a long brown face and droll brown eyes. His hair was brushed carefully back from his forehead, and his mouth, long and thin and mobile, was as droll as his eyes.

"Bill," said Aunt Gertrude, with determination. "Listen. You've got no money."

"A pittance," corrected Bill.

"A mere nothing," said Aunt Gertrude. "Either you must get some work to do or you must *marry* money."

"Ah, the old story," moaned Bill, pushing his plate vaguely from him and leaning back in his chair. "One would think you weren't glad to have me staying with you, helping to make your tea-parties a success, mowing the lawn——"

"Perkins would rather you didn't mangle his lawn, by the way."

"Keeping the goldfish under observation, being the life and soul of the village——"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Aunt Gertrude. "Now, listen, Bill. I have decided. You must do something. Otherwise, when I die, you'll be stranded. Don't forget that I only have a life interest in my money——"

"My dear Auntie. There is always Great-uncle Ephraim's money."

"Pooh! Uncle Ephraim will live another thirty years; and he'll leave his money to the Dogs' Home. Don't think of it. I've thought of everything. If you won't work——"

"Auntie!" Bill was reproachful.

"You must marry."

"My Great-uncle Ephraim is rich. He must have a million dollars, which as you

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know, my dear Auntie, is two hundred thousand pounds. On such a sum one could live—I won't say luxuriously——"

"Rubbish. Uncle Ephraim is a fraud."

"I'm not so sure. What will you bet me?"

"I'll bet you—— No, I won't. You can't spare it. Uncle Ephraim is—after all, why *should* he leave his money to you? He's never seen you——"

"Exactly. Why shouldn't he?"

"I know the very girl for you."

"I'm afraid no girl in the village could ever——"

"I don't mean a girl in the village. I mean an heiress." Aunt Gertrude ignored Bill's calm smile, and proceeded: "I'm not joking. I mean what I say. In fact, I've taken some steps——"

"Good Lord!" Bill was genuinely alarmed.

"The very girl. I haven't seen her for ten years, and she's an orphan. She lost her mother two years ago, and her father when she was a child. She's got a fortune. About fifty thousand pounds. Her name is Elizabeth Barry. She's twenty-two. And she is coming this afternoon to stay with me for a month."

"Coming!" screamed Bill, sitting upright. "This afternoon! My dear Auntie; I'm called suddenly to town——"

"You're meeting her with me, and driving the car, at three o'clock."

"Impossible. I shall insult her! I shall drive you into the ditch."

"You'll do nothing of the kind. If she's a nice girl—I knew her mother very well, and I expect her to be nice—you'll fall in love with her."

Bill gave a ghastly laugh. He looked round the pretty little breakfast-room, and out through the latticed windows at the brilliant garden. It was June, and the sun was high. The trees were very green, and the birds still made merry among the clustering leaves. Within the room, with its plain cream walls and its old oak furniture, all was delicious and full of ease and comfort. But Bill was filled with consternation.

"Love!" he laughed.

"It might happen. We'll arrange for you to save her life, or something. That always does wonders."

"We'll arrange! I like that!"

"You can leave the whole thing to me," said Aunt Gertrude, confidently. "In fact, I may say that I've put the matter in train."

Bill groaned. He was terrified.

"Does she know——?" he stammered. "Does she know your plans?"

Aunt Gertrude demurred.

"I've mentioned that you're staying with me," she replied. "I even sent her a snapshot of you—standing by the lily-pond—just to give her a notion—and if the girl is sensible she'll realize that the situation has possibilities."

"Golly!" cried Bill. "Snapshot. Well, I should *think* so. Snapshot, indeed! A bit crude, eh? Still, she's coming. I suppose she hasn't sent her *own* photograph?" Although he spoke with levity, he had the appearance of a rabbit confronted by a stoat.

II.

AUNT GERTRUDE'S delightful Elizabethan cottage stood amid five or six acres of orchard and garden, at a distance of seven miles from the nearest railway station. It was two and a half miles from the village of Plurt, and was as rural as any human being could wish. Bill loved to lounge in the garden, to walk briskly about the countryside, to talk to the villagers, and to speculate endlessly upon existence. He was a born speculator upon the problems of existence. It was not that he was wholly an idler—he was not—but circumstances had led him latterly to a somewhat idle way of life. War experiences in the East had left him shattered. Some sort of rest and rebuilding of his strength had been essential. And so, with gradually returning vigour, he had found Aunt Gertrude's home a haven.

More than that. Aunt Gertrude was the only mother he had known; for his mother had died in giving him birth. His father had not long survived her. Bill, left a baby, with a very small income, had been tended by Aunt Gertrude until it was time for him to go to school. His holidays had always been spent with her. And as soon as his schooldays had ended the war had arrived, and with the war came Bill's real entry into the rough world. He had played his part as a youngster, had been wounded, had suffered in the East from all the rigours of warfare. And ever since the termination of the war he had been trying hard to earn a living.

In vain. His own account of his experience, although exaggerated, was not untrue. He had gone into several offices, had shown the quickness of his wits, his energy, and his disrespect for ordinary business convention. In each case, by a misfortune, he had worked for men of the conventional beefy type; and the result had been—for Bill—disastrous. After the last experience, which had ended six months before, Bill had suffered again from malaria; his health had collapsed; and he had sought refuge with Aunt Gertrude. This refuge was now to be destroyed. As he sat beside her, driving to the station to meet the disquieting heiress, Bill knew that duty pointed once again to the long, long trail.

"I must get along." His lips moved; but he did not speak aloud. The car shaved the edge of a deep ditch. Far off, they could see a cloud of white smoke. A shrill whistle sounded. That was the train. It would reach the station-platform at about the instant at which they would draw up by the station-door.

"Hurry, Bill," commanded Aunt Gertrude.

Mechanically, Bill accelerated. The car sprang forward, whizzing as Bill loved to make her whiz. But his heart was very low. They beat the train by a couple of seconds, and Aunt Gertrude was upon the platform, with Bill in attendance, as the long row of coaches came grinding to a standstill.

Only two passengers left the train. One was a farmer known to them. The other was a girl who looked as if she had come from an orphanage. She wore a wide-brimmed, flat-topped straw hat with a red ribbon round it, and a shapeless blue cloak which fell nearly to her ankles. She helped, tip-toeing, to lift her single dressing-case from the carriage, receiving it from the hands of a late fellow-passenger; and then stood looking dolefully along the platform towards Bill and his aunt, and the lumbering old porter. Her attitude bespoke complete dejection. Her mouth was drawn down at the corners, and pursed. Her eyes peered from behind large black-rimmed spectacles.

"Our visitor hasn't come," murmured Aunt Gertrude. "Dear me, I hope she's not lost."

But the girl, catching sight of our friends, began to carry her dressing-case towards them; and Bill, with quick-wittedness in excess of his aunt's, ran quickly to relieve her of its burden. He heard his aunt ejaculate incredulously; saw her step hesitatingly forward and take the hand of the little spectacled figure, was introduced, caught at a limp little paw, which hung—or seemed to hang—at the end of a pump-handle, and followed the two of them out of the station.

"Good Lord!" thought he. "And this is the heiress! Good Lord!"

He had the front seat of the car to himself. Aunt Gertrude, sitting behind with the little creature who had arrived by train, was strangely and significantly silent. Gloom gathered behind Bill as the car swept through the lovely scenery and between the scented hedgerows, but Bill himself, managing the throttle and the steering-gear with revived skill, found difficulty in restraining a smile in which thankfulness vied with mischievous pleasure in Aunt Gertrude's discomfiture.

III.

WORSE was to follow. They reached home very quickly, and Bill put the car away. He strolled round the garden, smoking a cigarette, in order to avoid Aunt Gertrude, and then went in for tea. His aunt was sitting in her usual chair by the window, with the little tea-table drawn up in front of her. She did not meet his glance, and thereby confessed her state of shock. Instead of speaking, indeed, she began to fidget nervously with the cups and saucers.

The faint chinking had barely begun before Bill heard Aunt Gertrude gasp. He looked up at her, followed her gaze, and was petrified in his turn. The stranger had entered the room, and was upon them, overwhelmingly. Bill had never seen anything like the apparition at which his aunt had gasped. Elizabeth Barry stood there very awkwardly, her shoulders bent and her arms hanging; and her dress was the most disagreeable thing Bill had ever met with in the course of his lifetime. It was a perfectly frightful kind of electric pink—a pink so raw and so strident that it killed everything that came near it. Aunt Gertrude's smile of welcome, for example, was slain instantly, and withered upon her lips. Bill could not wonder. He felt himself shivering in sympathy.

Above the pink dress there was the doleful little spectacled face of the stranger, and a mat of dark hair, which seemed to hang about her head like rats' tails. She held herself badly, walked badly, in a sort of stumbling, shambling way, and seemed overcome with nervousness. Quickly sliding into a chair, she stretched out her hand for the cup and saucer which Bill carried, and sat with downcast eyes, as if speechless, her feet indescribably crossed, like a pile of old boots. Only one thing could Bill see in her favour. It was that her hands, as she received the cup and saucer, were exquisitely small and delicate. For the rest, she was appalling. He retreated. The three were tongue-tied for quite two minutes, which seemed like an hour and a half.

Aunt Gertrude was the first to make a desperate effort at conversation.

"I hope you found everything you needed in your room, Elizabeth?" she said, with her natural kindness. And then, quickly: "Do they call you Elizabeth or Betty?"

The strange child hesitated.

"Lizzie," she said, hoarsely.

Bill felt his aunt shudder. He surmised that she would be out of action for a few moments; and so he rumbled along to the rescue.

"D'you like the country?" he asked. "I mean this sort of thing."

Elizabeth Barry stood there very awkwardly. Her dress was the most disagreeable thing Bill had ever met; Aunt Gertrude's smile of welcome withered upon her lips.

Again that hesitation. Then, as if it was said in a flurry of nervousness :—

" I love it ! " That cracked little voice ! The wriggling of her shoulders !

" Riding ? " persisted Bill, gently. A quickly shaken head. " Driving ? Walking ? " As Bill spoke, he looked down at her feet, and almost jumped as he saw the big, ugly shoes which Elizabeth wore. No wonder she shambled, if her feet were as big as that !

" I like sitting still," said the stranger, abruptly.

" An excellent device," Bill assured her. " The garden here is made for loitering. It's the perfect garden for that."

" As Bill well knows." Aunt Gertrude had recovered her coolness. " I hope you won't encourage him to idle, Elizabeth."

" Oh, no," said Elizabeth, with a cackling laugh. " *I* won't encourage him." She looked dully at Bill through her glasses as she spoke ; and Bill knew that she would not encourage him. " What does he do for his living ? " asked Elizabeth, sharply.

Bill winced. So soon ? His eyes roved the room for escape. After all, it was Aunt Gertrude who had invited this girl here. He had not been consulted at all. And if he left the next morning, to resume his efforts to earn a living, nobody had any right to complain.

" I advise business men how to run their businesses," he answered, as gaily as he could.

" Oh ! " She seemed to consider. " Do they take your advice ? "

" On the whole, no," admitted Bill,

candidly. "But they will. But they will."

"I wonder if they will?" The cracked voice was barely audible. Bill was not to be perturbed; but he was forced to admit to himself that this chit was excessively pert.

"I have every confidence," he told her, smiling.

Did he imagine it, or was he not mistaken in thinking that a gleam of interest came into the dull eyes of the visitor? Spectacles are such liars when it comes to the eyes behind them! Aunt Gertrude, at any rate, had missed the gleam, if it had arisen at all, for she came hurriedly to Bill's assistance with a diversion.

"Do you play or sing, Elizabeth?" she asked.

"A little. Haven't got much of a voice. I've brought some music," briefly and hoarsely Elizabeth answered. "You see, I've been a good deal alone since mother died." There was a tired break in that weary voice. It was gone instantly. "Most of the time I've been travelling about with friends."

"With friends." Bill heard his aunt's murmur. He knew that she was thinking: "What sort of friends can they be, to let you wear a dress like that?" And, as if Elizabeth had somehow uncannily known it also, she continued:—

"This is the first coloured frock I've worn for ages. I'm sick of black. I thought as I was coming here to stay I'd better get some fresh clothes. My old ones are all—— There's some more coming on by post."

"Some more." Aunt Gertrude merely echoed the words. It was as if she had screamed in a whisper. Her pale face twitched with apprehensiveness. One hand was pressed nervously against her cheek.

"Yes," said Elizabeth. "I didn't have time to get all I wanted before starting. So I asked one of my friends to get me some."

"Indeed!"

"Travelling about, I haven't seen anything—you know—suitable for the country."

Suitable! Was this—this fearsome, eye-pulverizing, murderous garment—what she considered suitable? No hint at all of incongruity on that demure little face, with the downcast eyes and the clustered rats' tails. Suitable! What fresh horrors had she in store? What new enormities would be arriving by post? Bill could have imagined that Aunt Gertrude shuddered from head to foot. Nevertheless, his aunt, observing with an effort at self-control that the girl had finished her tea, held out her hand, and Bill hastened to recover the superfluous cup and saucer.

"More tea?" Aunt Gertrude asked.

"No, thank you."

"No? Another cake? Then would you—would you like to come for a walk in the garden?"

Bill, from his place at the door, watched Elizabeth rise and shamble past him into the garden, following Aunt Gertrude. He had never seen a stranger contrast than the slim, delicate erectness of his aunt and the bent, almost shapeless ungracefulness of Elizabeth. It was hard to believe that they belonged to the same sex and the same class. Here was another problem for the philosopher to consider deeply. Was it not insoluble? Bill thought it was.

He presently took the same direction as the others, drawing his pipe from the pocket of his tweed jacket and slowly loading it. As he did this, he laughed unexpectedly. His heart was lighter. Clearly Aunt Gertrude could not hold to her original plan. On the other hand, would not a month of this be more than they could stand? After all, one cannot concentrate upon a pair of exquisite hands for four solid weeks, especially when the owner of those hands appears to be slightly humpbacked, splay-footed, pert, and possessed of an electrifying wardrobe. What was Bill to do? Go or stay?

It was a difficult question. He sauntered in the wake of the others, ever and again watching them as they paused by the lily-pond, or in the rose-garden, or upon the edge of the tennis-lawn. Always, when he did this, he was amused—almost touched—at the quaintness of Elizabeth's odd figure and shambling gait.

IV.

THEY had listened to her singing in a cracked voice which at times could not reach the notes at which it seemed to be aimed, and they had heard the excruciating mess made by her fingers of some apparently simple pianoforte pieces. And they were sitting in dizzy silence, quite fogged by dismay, when they heard Elizabeth say:—

"Don't *you* play or sing, Mr.——? You *are* a lazy thing!"

She had clambered noiselessly across the carpet, and had surprised Bill and Aunt Gertrude in the paralysed attitudes of those who have abandoned interest in life. She now stood by Bill, looking down at him—peering, rather, through her deceptive spectacles.

"I neither play nor sing, Miss Barry. In fact, I don't care for music."

"Bill!" It was a whispered—a smothered, choked—protest from Aunt Gertrude.

"You mean *my* music?" asked the cracked little voice. "How unkind!"

"All music," responded Bill, firmly. "Beethoven, Mozart, Gershwin. Music is abhorrent to me."

"I love it!" cried Elizabeth, ardently.

"'And each man kills the thing he loves,'" secretly quoted Bill. Aloud he said: "I'm sure you do. And so does my aunt."

"No, Bill," said Aunt Gertrude, with reluctant decisiveness. "I can't say that I have any ear for music."

"I'll train it while I'm here," declared Elizabeth. "I'll have *all* my music sent to me. We'll have an orgy of music."

"You mustn't trouble," begged Aunt Gertrude. "Really, I couldn't think of it——"

"I'd love to. It's so nice to feel that you've really helped somebody. And you don't know what you're missing."

"Others have tried," said Aunt Gertrude, lugubriously. "But in vain."

"What a triumph for me when I succeed! We'll have an hour's music every evening. It will be *lovely*. And what shall we do now?"

"What would you like to do?" It was Bill's turn to speak, and he gallantly rose to his duty.

Elizabeth peered up at him, and gushingly responded to his question.

"I wish we could go out into the moonlight. It's so *romantic*." She giggled.

"I have rather a headache," wavered Aunt Gertrude. "I——"

The stiff little figure gave a jerk that was intended to be arch.

"Then of course you mustn't, Miss Paget. But you, Mr.—Mr. Bill. I don't know your other name. Won't *you* join me? I'm sure *you're* romantic." She looked up meaningly through the rats' tails, and a quiver ran through Bill at such early and inappropriate archness. Nevertheless, he was staunch.

"I'm ready," he declared. "Come along. I'll take you along to the Mere."

That word caused a remarkable gush of sentiment.

"Really? A mere. How lovely! Moonlight on the mere! It sounds like Tennyson." She seemed hoarse with delight. "Can one swim there?"

"I do, every morning."

There was a sudden change in the atmosphere. Elizabeth's gush fell away. She spoke quietly.

"How splendid! Could I? I wish——" She checked herself. These words had been unlike any that she had previously spoken. Her voice for a moment had been quite clear—neither hoarse nor cracked. Evidently the thought of bathing in the Mere had moved her deeply. Bill was startled. Then, in the old tone, like the voice of a damaged piedish, she resumed: "Just wait till I change my shoes."

She pottered across the room, and was gone. They were alone. Aunt Gertrude covered her face with her hands.

"It's terrible. Terrible," she moaned.

"You see," said Bill, accusingly, "how unwise it is to tempt Providence. This is the girl you proposed that I should marry. Why, a *million* wouldn't tempt me. I'd rather stick to the chance of Great-uncle Ephraim. Why not? You and I were quite happy until you took this bizarre crotchet into your head. Look at us now. Both of us. Let it be a lesson to you, my dear Auntie. A *lesson* to you. Great-uncle Ephraim for ever!"

His aunt, greatly depressed, nodded her head. She could not speak. She was a broken woman.

V.

THE walk by the Mere was entrancing, and Bill was astonished to find that the little visitor did not spoil it. She was as silent before its beauty as anybody could have wished. Having learned the path, which was a simple one leading through a wood at the end of Aunt Gertrude's garden, Elizabeth next asked at what time Bill was in the habit of taking his bathe. He told her—seven o'clock. They walked back to the house, she shambling painfully, as if her shoes were heavy, and once within the house she bade good night and went to bed. So ended the first day of this curious encounter. Bill, sitting in the drawing-room for a last smoke before retiring, found his first impressions of the waif slightly modified. Her hands and her feet were at war. Her gush over music, and her perfectly terrible performance, had made him feel that she must be a fool; yet once or twice she had shown herself no fool. But his final conclusion was laughter, at the preposterous downfall of Aunt Gertrude's scheme.

The night was unexpectedly cold, as it often is in England in June; and Bill was awakened early by a sense of chilliness. He pulled the bedclothes over him and tried to get warm. Then, thoroughly awake, he looked at his watch. It was half-past six, and he generally rose and took his bathe at seven. Only a moment's doubt preceded his resolve to go at once. Leaping up, he wrapped around himself the warm dressing-gown which he always used, seized a towel, and made his way out of the house.

It was so chilly in the fresh morning air that Bill ran down the garden and into the wood, and proceeded to run along the

narrow path through the wood towards the Mere, skipping like a young stag over every obstacle. And as he so lightly ran he heard a strange shrill cry. It came from in front of him—from the Mere. Could it be a cry for help? He raced, shouting once, sharply, as he ran. The cry came again. Bill dashed through the last few yards of the wood, pushed aside some overhanging branches, and came to the edge of the Mere.

In the morning light that calm, quicksilver-like sheet of water, in which every reflection was brilliantly clear, was as beautiful as ever. Very calm and still it lay, without a ripple. Bill's eye swept over its surface. His heart rose suddenly. There, well out in the middle of the silent water, he saw a dark head, a white arm.

"Hi!" came the voice. "Help! Quick! Cramp!"

"Right!" Without an instant's delay, Bill threw aside his dressing-gown and plunged in, altogether disregarding his pyjamas, which hung about him in bitter folds, but did not hamper his movements. Ugh, the water was nippy! "Hold tight!" Bill gurgled. He was a very powerful swimmer, and he had been in the habit of swimming here since he could swim at all, and so he was out in the middle of the Mere, and approaching the distressed bather, in a few seconds. The danger was no longer a danger. Such swiftness would have dismissed far greater peril. Then, as he came alongside, Bill saw to his astonishment that he was rescuing Elizabeth!

"Golly!" cried he. "Hold on: got hold of me?" Slap went his arms. He had never swum more strongly. "Are you all right?"

"Yes," came a little voice—as clear as a bell. "I'm glad you came."

THE return journey was made more slowly, owing to Bill's burden; but the distance was still slight enough, and a few moments brought them safely ashore, under the shadow of the soft willows and into the silence of the wood. Elizabeth, tumbling over as she tried to stand, sank at the edge of the water, and sat there, a slim figure in her bathing costume, her cramped leg stretched out quite straight. She was trembling now, and her teeth were chattering. Forlorn enough and small enough, but without her spectacles, and somehow dignified as well as pathetic. Bill's heart warmed inexplicably.

"I'd better carry you to the house. Where's your dressing-gown? Here, take mine." He picked up his own, and put it around her cosily, so that only her feet remained exposed, and an unexpected mass of damp, rather curly hair.

"My leg's so bad," Elizabeth whispered. "Ouch!"

She had tried to rise, and sank down again in pain. Her little hands were clenched.

"Too bad," murmured Bill, sympathetically. He knelt beside her, rubbing the limb as vigorously as he could, in order to restore circulation. "It was lucky I came a bit early——"

She had paled slightly.

"More than lucky," she said, as if she were breathless. For an instant she swayed against his shoulder. "I might have been among the weeds by now."

"You'd have managed," said Bill, briefly. "I'm frightened you'll catch cold," he panted, presently, as he rubbed. "You oughtn't to have come down alone, you know. Or I ought to have thought of it, and come earlier still."

"I thought I was being clever," she said, in his ear. "Worst of being an idiot. There, that's ever so much better. Shall we go?"

She stood up painfully, her face hidden from him, the dressing-gown—his dressing-gown—draped closely around her. A moment later her arms were raised, and Bill had lifted her from the ground. Then, bearing his burden very carefully, he began the journey back through the wood and towards Aunt Gertrude's cottage. It was not an easy journey in present circumstances. And it gave them both time to think and to observe.

"I hope nobody will see us," said Elizabeth, anxiously. "I should hate Miss Paget to——"

"Nobody," Bill reassured her. "Auntie won't be up; and this is the one time in the day when the maids are too busy to look out of the windows."

He felt her laugh—or did she shiver? Impossible to know. Once or twice branches heavy with leaves plucked at her hair and at the dressing-gown. And all the time her arms were around Bill's neck, and Bill's strong arms carried her through the wood as if she had been a baby. Nevertheless, as they reached the garden, he was panting a little.

"I'm too heavy." It was a murmur.

"You're a feather."

"Stop here and rest a minute."

"And have you catching cold? No! It's quite close now. Another spurt, and we're there."

"I say," began Elizabeth, in a strange little apologetic voice. "I feel a bit mean, you know."

"Well, don't do it again, that's all," said Bill. "Not unless I'm there to fish you

Bill knelt beside her, rubbing the limb as vigorously as he could, in order to restore circulation.

out. The water's apt to be chilly." That was everything he was going to say about the escapade. It had ended fortunately. He had luckily been near, and had heard her cry in time. The rest was automatic. He did not want gratitude. But he was conscious that the morning had immediately altered their relationship. They could not in future be strangers. For one thing, he now saw Elizabeth without her spectacles. He saw unobscured, that is, a face that was both piquante and delightful. He also saw Elizabeth's hair, and felt it against his cheek, as a curly mass, and not as a miserable collection of odd ends, as it had seemed to be upon the previous night.

There was something intoxicatingly alluring about her this morning. She was changed—in looks, in voice, in manner, in everything. A most peculiar emotion, which he had never previously known, surged up in Bill's breast. He repressed it. Laughter followed, and the impulse to tease. Surely their acquaintance was making rapid strides! Dare he speak a candid word? Should he? No. Yes.

"I say," said Bill. "Er—if I might give you a word of advice—leave your hair as it is." He glanced sideways into a soft brown eye, dull no longer, but fresh with the dewy freshness of early morning.

"What d'you mean?" she demanded. "Wet?"

Bill hesitated again. His courage almost fled.

"No," he said, sturdily. "I mean—not in rats' tails." He heard her gasp.

They were indoors, unseen. They were upon the stairs—at the door of her room. He had set her down. Colour flamed in her cheeks. The sense that she was quite different this morning from what she had been thrilled Bill anew. She looked really arch, attractive, winning. With that colour, with that shyness, she was the most charming picture he had ever seen. It was difficult to think her the same person.

"I want to thank you," she said. "You've been——" She caught his hand, and pressed it gently. "You've been splendid." Then, with the blood in her cheeks, and a broad smile upon her lips, and a convulsion as of laughter, she indignantly exclaimed, "Rats' tails, indeed!" And, turning, was lost to his view, a little figure wrapped in a large woolly dressing-gown that trailed after her as if it had been a Court robe.

VI.

As he dressed that morning, Bill had a number of very peculiar and illuminating thoughts; and he went down to the cream, lattice-windowed breakfast-room whistling a little air. He did not, of course, whistle when Aunt Gertrude, looking apprehensive, arrived; but greeted his aunt with a smile of good cheer. She, however, came close to him, her lips tightly drawn together, and her ordinarily kind and smiling eyes hard with determination.

"I've quite made up my mind," she said. "I'm going to be taken ill."

"My dear Auntie!" Bill threw back his head and laughed.

"Anything else is quite impossible. You must go away, and I'll fall very ill. I'm sure dear old Dr. Downey wouldn't mind saying I was too ill to be nursed. Hush!"

Elizabeth slopped into the room. Her hair was not in rats' tails, but it had been brushed very severely, so that it lay flat upon the top of her head. Her glasses were in place, and her frock was a dingy red, the colour of flannel, and somewhat of its appearance.

"Goodness!" whispered Aunt Gertrude to herself. "Impossible!"

Elizabeth and Bill exchanged a glance—upon her side imploring silence regarding the bathing episode; upon his not imploring anything at all. The three of them settled themselves about the breakfast table, while all without was bright and encouraging, with sunshine and the songs of many birds.

"Did you sleep well, my dear?" asked Aunt Gertrude, freezingly.

"Thank you, yes." Elizabeth's voice was suddenly cracked again, so that Bill started with surprise.

"Will you have tea or coffee? I have both here."

"Coffee, please."

During these amenities they had forgotten Bill, who had found a long envelope beside his plate, had sliced it open, and had begun to read the contents. Suddenly he sprang to his feet, with a wild "Hooray!" His face was deeply red, as if with excitement. As quickly as it had arisen, however, his excitement died down. He looked at both the astonished ladies, and said, gravely enough:—

"I'm sorry to have to tell you that this letter contains news of the death of a man I never saw. My Great-uncle Ephraim, in fact."

"Dead!" screamed Aunt Gertrude. "And *has he?*"

"He has left me the whole of his fortune, amounting to five hundred thousand dollars—one hundred thousand pounds in our currency—and I'm a rich man." He was rather pale.

"Rich!" cried Aunt Gertrude. "Then you won't have to marry an—— I mean——"

Bill looked at Elizabeth. She also was pale.

"My aunt," he said, quietly, "has been

afraid that the only chance I had in life was marriage with a rich wife."

"Yes," said Elizabeth, quite as quietly. "She told me that when she sent me your photographs."

"Photographs-s-s! Plural!" shouted Bill. "Oh, you wicked woman! Elizabeth, do you know that she revealed to me yesterday morning this notion of hers. She told me that she'd invited you. She admitted that she'd sent you *one snapshot*."

"Three photographs—one a cabinet," said Elizabeth. "So I thought I'd come and see what you were really like. You sounded awful."

"You impertinent girl!" cried Aunt Gertrude. "He's a rich man!"

"Aha!" exclaimed Bill. "You thought you'd come—— Oho!" And with that, to the astonishment of both of his companions, he raised his fist and violently struck the table before him. His face was that of a judge pronouncing sentence.

VII.

ALMOST nothing more was said during the meal, of which none of them ate very much. Aunt Gertrude sat with her colour coming and going, mincing with a piece of toast; Elizabeth kept her head low, so that only her flattened hair and the large spectacles and the tip of her demure nose could be seen. As for Bill, he read and re-read the solicitors' letter which had brought him the glad tidings.

"This makes a lot of difference," said Bill, ruminatively.

"Yes; you're richer than *I* am," added a little cracked voice.

"*Twice* as rich!" snapped Aunt Gertrude.

Silence thereafter. It continued until Aunt Gertrude abandoned her toast and looked coldly towards Elizabeth. And at that all three rose. Bill followed the others; and as Elizabeth was about to go out of the room he caught her arm.

Bill snatched from her nose the spectacles which disfigured her face.

"I want to speak to Miss Paget," she protested.

"There's something I want to say to you first. All right, Aunt Gertrude." Bill had a new masterfulness in his manner, and Aunt Gertrude made no demur. She proceeded upon her way, with straight back and head held very high, while Bill closed the breakfast-room door and confronted Elizabeth. For a moment he frowned sternly upon her. Then he snatched from her nose the spectacles which disfigured her face. "Masquerader!" he hissed. "Take off those absurd shoes! Do your hair

properly! Put on a pretty frock! And let's see what you're *really* like!"

"I won't!" Elizabeth, fiery red, stamped her foot.

"You will!" Bill glared at her. "You've no right to play a trick like this on a nice old thing like Aunt Gertrude!"

"How was *I* to know she was nice? Or you either? You both sounded *awful*. And, anyway," flared Elizabeth, "she had no right to think of me as a convenient chattel. She wrote as if the highest good I could hope for was to support an insufferable prig for the rest of his life."

"Prig meaning me," swallowed Bill.

"But you're *not*. You're a d——" It was Elizabeth's turn to swallow.

"Listen," said Bill. "When you've apologized to Auntie——"

Elizabeth gave one sob. Said she:—

"I should be doing it now, if you hadn't kept me here."

"You and I will have a talk," continued Bill, as if she had not spoken.

"I'm leaving by the eleven o'clock train." She was defiant. "I'm going back to my friends and comfortable shoes."

Bill shrugged his shoulders.

"You're doing no such thing," said he.

Again they faced each other with flashing eyes. Then, as if the strain for seriousness was too great, they both began to laugh; and Elizabeth's two hands were in Bill's.

"I'm sorry," she said, with real penitence. "I started in fun. I wanted to frighten you both for being sordid." Bill shrugged a second time.

"You succeeded," he told her. "You gave us the fright of our lives—especially Auntie, who must have felt she'd burnt her boats. But you couldn't hide your hands, you know. Hands and feet go together. The hands gave you away."

"What!" cried Elizabeth. "You knew all the time?" Her eyes shone.

"I'm afraid Auntie won't forgive you," Bill prevaricated. "I think you took her in; and she won't forgive that. Who *would?*"

"Will you?" Elizabeth spoke very low.

He hesitated. He was trying to look into her eyes, and she would not allow him to do so. There was so much to tell her that the rest of his life would not be long enough for the telling. Bill's breathing was a little faster than usual. If only he could see her eyes! At last he abandoned the attempt, and answered.

"I'll forgive you everything on one condition," he said. "It's a hard one."

"Is it too hard?" whispered Elizabeth.

"Perhaps so. It is that you do what you were brought here for."

"You mean, m——" The colour overspread her face afresh. Then, breathlessly: "Oh, but you don't need me now."

Her hands were no longer her own.

"After all, I saved your life," Bill reminded her, shamelessly "You owe me something for that. And, also, I shall want your help in spending my new fortune."

"Nothing else?" whispered Elizabeth. "You shame me."

She was in his arms. Her hair was being ruffled into some semblance of its normal richness.

"For Heaven's sake, burn that pink dress!" Bill said in her ear. He felt her laughter. "It nearly killed both Auntie and me."

"And my singing?" asked Elizabeth, with a smothered bubbling of laughter.

"YOU wretch!" cried a voice which made the two of them start apart. Aunt Gertrude stood in the doorway. Her white hair seemed to stand erect in horror. "You little wretch! And your playing! And let me ask you this! Parker has just found Bill's dressing-gown in your room. She asks, what about it? How did it get there?"

She looked very stern; but the corners of her mouth were twitching.

"Auntie!" cried Bill. "I can explain everything. But would you mind first forgiving my future wife? She has been naughty now; but she is going to make up for it in future, by being as good as gold. She'll be a daughter to you, Auntie."

"An hour's music a day!" groaned Aunt Gertrude. "And your *dresses*, my dear!" She continued to frown, with twitching lips, until Elizabeth ran imploringly to her side. Then, immediately, Aunt Gertrude capitulated. "However, if Bill wants me to forgive you, I suppose I must."

"Don't forget, Auntie, that it was you who brought her here," said Bill. "The credit is all yours. You can claim it for the future."

"True," agreed his aunt. "And after all, it is quite nice for a wife—even the wife of a rich man—to have a little money of her own."

The Fullness of Time

By

ROLAND PERTWEE

Illustrated by
H. COLLER

ALAN GILLINGHAM and his wife, Ursula, married for love, and not in vain. In their union was that quality of tentativeness which, although rare in marriage, is one of the most enchanting features of courtship. When Alan kissed his wife's wrist, the scented hollows at the back of her ears, her finger-tips, or the aromatic palm of her hand, he did so as a man performing a chivalry for the first time. In the same fashion Ursula rumpled his hair or rubbed her cheek against his shoulder, or ran a finger-nail down the back seam of his coat, which I would have you know is an osteopathic form of endearment very delightful to experience.

It may be said of them that they had discovered the secret of intimacy without familiarity.

In an atmosphere thus charged with harmony and mutual appreciation Alan and Ursula had taken for granted that each was acceptable to the other and would remain so. Any change of attitude or feeling was too remote a contingency to justify the effort of thought. Thus it befell that Ursula barely apprehended that, with the passage of years, her figure by infinitesimal degrees was assuming a maturity of outline, and the discovery came upon her like a bolt from the blue.

Alan was seated on a stool before the fire reading a novel, when Ursula came softly into the room. Following time-honoured tradition, she trailed an affectionate finger between his shoulder-blades; but instead of following another time-honoured tradition and saying: "Hullo, my sweet!" and possessing himself of her hand and kissing the finger-tips, Alan Gillingham pivoted on the stool, ran a cordial eye over his wife's form, grinned, and caught her a hearty whack. Nor was this all, for the hand, coming to rest, patted her twice and pinched her once before drifting back to the book he had been holding.

To Alan his action had been a symbol of hearty affection—to Ursula it was first evidence of that familiarity which in the fullness of time would blossom into contempt.

The fullness of time. The phrase whirled in her mind as she fled from the study and dizzily climbed the stairs.

The fullness of time.

She paused on the half-landing and with exquisite nervousness felt her hips. Accustomed all her life to a fragility only equalled by the dainty ladies from the porcelain kilns of Sèvres, the possession of hips was unthinkable. And yet they were there, and Alan, howbeit unconsciously, had discovered them, even before she herself was aware of their existence.

"Bulk," Ursula repeated to herself. "Oh, dear Heaven, I'm bulky!"

And from that moment the course of their lives was changed.

To a man of affectionate disposition it is a sorry business to have to take second place to his wife's figure. But this was the case in which Alan found himself. The delightful little meals which they had enjoyed in the past assumed a sudden frugality. The menu, once tasty and varied, became dietetic. The abolition of all foodstuffs alleged to contain starch left a gap in the bill of fare very punishing to a hearty appetite. New bread and crisp rolls vanished from the table, to be replaced by charcoal biscuits, or a preparation which resembled small squares of linoleum. Also, there was toast Melba, which is so thin and hard and irritable that it flies all over the

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room when poked with a finger. The practice of drinking with meals was also abolished, and Alan witnessed the distressing spectacle of his wife sipping from a glass of boiling water at unusual hours.

One day in every week, with disastrous results to temper, Ursula went without food of any kind.

It must not be imagined that between meals she reverted to her old self. The campaign against the fullness of time demanded the performance of many exercises and strange rituals. From an advertisement she learnt of the new rubber roller and how this was a juggernaut for the demolition of those adipose tissues which are the burden of so many married ladies.

Not even the lawnsmen in charge of the Centre Court at Wimbledon rolled more tirelessly and industriously than did Ursula. When she had rolled until her arms would roll no more, she performed exercises at the injunction and command of a series of physical culture gramophone records.

With so much to do and so little to do it on, it is not to be imagined that Ursula had leisure or inclination for dalliance with her husband. She had started to get thin for Alan's sake, but she continued for its own sake. It became an obsession with her, as was apparent when she refused to abate so much as a single movement of the roller to admit of his embraces.

IGNORANT of the cause inspiring her activity, Alan attempted, in a variety of ways, to attract attention to himself. The delicate intimacies of bygone days seeming unlikely to pierce the armour in which she had encased herself, he developed the hearty voice and hand method, which, although he did not suspect it, had been the foundation of his misfortunes.

To the overwrought and underfed Ursula the sweeping approach of Alan's ten-inch palm was like a voice crying: "Woman, you have failed."

And then, quite suddenly, Alan abandoned even heartiness and, sinking his chin upon his breast, began to concoct the stews of jealousy.

"For whom," he asked himself, "are these exercises practised, since there is no doubt I do not profit by them? For what man does she attack her figure with a garden roller and fill her rosy mouth with soot and coal-dust?"

But although he searched the recesses of his mind, he could find no answer. Accordingly, one day he presented himself before a friend, one Jim Rowlandson, and after three stiff whiskies propounded the problem impersonally.

Jim had a reputation for knowing a thing or two, and even when he did not know the right thing he always had ideas.

"Any constant visitor—trustworthy pal of the family—yes, no?" he queried.

"Not a soul."

"Ever criticized her contours to their disparagement?"

"Never. Why should I? What's an extra pound or two to me?"

"Probably a little extra amiability," was the worldly-wise rejoinder.

"Good shooting," said Alan.

"And how about yourself?" Jim inquired.

"I'm the same—just the same—'cept that I'm fed up."

"Show it at all?"

"Wouldn't make any odds if I did—she never looks."

Jim Rowlandson examined Alan through half-closed eyes.

"You're not so dusty," he said. "Clean-cut, well-tailored—not eccentrically dull. 'Course, that's a man's view—women may not see you in that light."

"Where's this lead?"

"On the face of it, you appear to have lost your charm."

Alan rose gloomily.

Jim Rowlandson held up a hand.

"I didn't say you had lost your charm; I merely suggest you may have lost it. If I were in your shoes I'd find out."

"How?"

"Come, come," said Jim. "There are plenty of little pinkies in the set you move in. I'd go about a bit more, and watch results."

Alan Gillingham mixed himself another drink.

"What the devil do you mean by pinkies?" he demanded.

Jim Rowlandson gestured lightly.

"A new name for young things," said he. "In this shingled age the word 'flapper' has disappeared and is supplanted by the word 'pinkie.' It arrives, I suppose, from the coral lobes of their little ears which peep forth from beneath a bunch of curls."

Alan sighed and shook his head.

"It's a nice thing if a man at my time of life has to start chasing pinkies," said he, and took his leave.

It is very doubtful if Alan would have pursued the course suggested by his friend had he not come upon Ursula engaged in depilatory measures against her eyebrows.

This latest extravagance was, to Alan, the final straw, and, abandoning all further hopes of domestic harmony, he embarked upon a social career of reckless frivolity.

TO the *jeune fille* enjoying the excitements of her first season nothing is so attractive as the addresses of a man of forty. Thus it is more painful than surprising to record that Alan Gillingham was literally surrounded by a company of lovely little things, who smiled and sighed and nodded and bit their lips at him whensoever and wheresoever he appeared.

There was hardly a *débutante* of that season who did not do her utmost to get herself kissed by Alan Gillingham.

Some may reproach Alan for failing to satisfy their inclinations in this matter, for, notwithstanding the fact that he admitted to a certain pleasure in living thus in a nursery of spring flowers, every one of which was dying to be worn in his buttonhole, he avoided intimacy.

Alan's admirers were as lilies of the valley, as the slender jonquil or pale anemone of the woods. Little, light, and fragile—they were thistledown girls.

It was strange and rather pathetic that no single one of them had even the embryonic suggestion of a figure. They may be likened to empty shells—to cigarettes of femininity—to little naiads clad in straight ups and downs—to half yards of single width. He attracted only the featherweights, and light as feathers they danced, floated, and settled about him in a bewildering confusion.

Ursula Gillingham with so much to occupy her at home had given no thought to her husband's absences. She was glad of them, since they afforded her leisure to practise her own activities. But for the intervention of a friend she would never have known what was going on.

The friend, Fleur Vereker, found Ursula reclining in a long chair after a gruelling course with the roller.

" Darling, I had to come and see you, I had, really," said Fleur. " Let's have tea at once or I shall burst into tears."

" I'll go and tell Laura," said Ursula.

" Tell ! Why not ring, darling ? "

" I never ring nowadays. Running up and down stairs is so reducing. I do the stairs from cellar to attic five times a day before breakfast."

Tea was commanded, brought, and consumed.

" Sweetest Ursula," said Fleur, " your Alan is a pig."

" Alan a pig ? You're wrong. I'm most particular never to let him eat too much."

" Not in that way, my precious darling. But he's fooling, Ursula, fooling desperately with scores of girls."

A partial interest gleamed in Ursula's eyes, then died away.

" A Charleston craze, that's all," said she. " The Charleston is terribly good for the hips. I'd take to it myself if I wasn't so utterly fagged at the end of the day."

" Come with me to-night," said Fleur. " Lady Wilmington is giving a ball at the Ritz and Alan will be there."

Ursula shook her head.

" Apart from it seeming rather shabby, I don't really feel up to going out."

" That can only mean," said Fleur, " that you don't care—that you have lost interest."

" Interest in what ? "

" Your husband."

Ursula reviewed this suggestion in silence. At last she said :—

" I don't think I have. Only my days are so full."

Under cover of a cushion she pinched herself to ascertain whether her figure could be left alone for one evening.

" P'r'aps I'll come," she said. " All right, yes, I will. But don't expect me to make a scene, because I'm certain Alan is all right."

" We shall see," said Fleur, " and you will see, and if after you have seen you don't have something to say, I shall be surprised."

THE subterranean ballroom at the Ritz was crowded with dancers when, at eleven p.m., Ursula and Fleur arrived. But Alan was not to be seen.

They were not aware that it had become his custom never to arrive at these functions before midnight. Of late his nervous system had begun to crack under the strain of carrying on nightly conversational gymnastics for the benefit of his cooing doves. In self-defence he found it necessary to curtail these performances. A yearning for companionship on more intellectual lines had begun to possess him. The pinkies were darlings, of course, very fresh and joyous, but a man of forty is in need of more mature entertainment than that of having his face tickled with mops of wavy hair and ears filled with " gligs " of juvenile merriment. They had served their turn in re-establishing his confidence in himself, but, having done that, their service was at an end.

That night at the club Alan had said to Jim Rowlandson :—

" A little summer of St. Luke's is very jolly in its way, but my inclinations are reverting to the autumnal. If Ursula refuses to offer me any sort of companionship, I shall have to make a pal of some dear soul I can talk to."

He appeared at Lady Wilmington's ball as the ninth encore of " Who " was dying of exhaustion.

Tall, lithe, and very good-looking, one finger hooked into the pocket of a ribbon

Like chickens hastening to their food, from all corners of the floor the willowy damsels came.

narrow dress waistcoat, he stood in the archway.

Fleur Vereker saw him simultaneously with a dozen willowy damsels. A cloud of drifting whites and pinks and mauves enveloped him even before she had spoken his name. Like chickens hastening to their food, from all corners of the floor they came, shamelessly deserting partners and uttering coos and croons of pleasure as they approached.

Ursula, standing in the gloom of a stairway, watched the rush and the deadly composure of her husband in the face of popularity. But it was not Alan's composure or his insolently possessive air that disturbed her; it was the fact that in every case the girls who surrounded him were slim as lilies of the valley, dainty as the jonquil, and fragile as wood anemones. Not a figure was among them, not a bust, not a hip, not even a calf worthy of the name.

In that moment Ursula touched the foundations of despair. That these girls adored Alan mattered to Ursula not at all. She was not one of those narrow-minded women who conceive that their husbands after marriage should have automatically become repellent to other members of her sex. She did not resent his attractiveness, but rather accepted it as a compliment to herself. But what was no compliment was his choice of admirers. It was useless to deceive herself that it was a mere coincidence that one and all were of such exquisite fragility.

The music started again, irony of ironies, with the tune whose words tell "that nobody loves a fat girl, but, oh! how a fat girl can love."

With, as it were, his arm about nothing—a lily stalk—Alan circled into the throng of dancers.

"You've seen," said Fleur. "Are you satisfied now?"

But Ursula could not trust herself to answer. A whimper was struggling to the surface with exquisite stabs of emotion. She did not want to let that whimper escape so long as pride and two tightly shut lips could suppress it.

Alan, half forgotten in the battle against the fullness of time, had by what she had seen vividly reasserted himself in the forefront of her affections.

"Let's get a taxi," she said. "It's hot in here—crowded."

Fleur was amazed and disappointed; for self-control in persons other than one's self robs every situation of its dramatic value.

"You are going without a word—without even letting him know you've been here?"

"You don't understand," said Ursula. "Who's to blame anyone for liking a pine better than a fat, lumpy oak?"

"I'm not married," said Fleur, icily, "and so perhaps I can't understand the indifference of married people, but if any husband of mine——"

She left the rest to take care of itself and went round a corner.

"What more can these wretched girls give him than you can?"

"It's the less, not the more," Ursula moaned, giving her nose a small blow. "That's the tragedy of it."

"You mean to sit down and do nothing?"

"Oh, no," said Ursula, with sudden ferocity. "I shall do a hundred per cent. more than I've ever done before."

And without a word of farewell she was gone.

IT was three a.m. when Alan came home.

"Another such night," said he, "and I'm for the river. Gosh!"

He turned into the sitting-room for a cigarette and a last drink.

He thought how cold, how gloomy, how deserted it was—this once jolly room of theirs. In the old days when he spent an evening away from Ursula she would sit up for him—or sleep up for him, curled in the big sofa before a rosy fire. And he would make his presence known by kissing the cool and dimpled elbow of her crooked arm; for the backs of all nice women's arms are cool as water, even as the inner sides of their arms are warm and soft to put about a man's neck.

"Happy, sensitive old days," he reflected. "Why, why do folks tire of one another?"

He stood for a moment by the window, parting the curtains and looking out.

"I'm not tired of her, though—or am I? Wonder if I am only able to care for those women who care for me—and who show it? Pretty shoddy thought, that—but there's something in it. Hard job, loving where there's no return. Poor value. Life's short—too short to accept loneliness without an effort. But why not make the effort here—at home?"

Animated by a sudden need for Ursula, a craving she alone could satisfy, he switched off the light and tiptoed up the staircase to her room.

Ursula was lying with her face to the wall, the curving contours of her body showing pale against a darker beyond. She was awake, but there was no evidence to prove it. Her breath came and went with the slow evenness of sleep.

She thought:—

"He's found me lying like this—I know I'm all curves—he'll be looking at them—comparing me with—— Oh, if only he'd

A shaft of moonlight splotched a corner of the dressing table, illumining "How dare you touch my wife!" said Alan, shook his fist at the hated

put his arms round me and say it doesn't matter! But he won't—I know he won't. Those wisps of girls—— I don't blame him, but—but—life's beastly."

Alan stood with one hand on the half-open door.

He thought:—

"You're such a darling—what did you give me up for? If only you were awake—— But you'd be cross if I waked you. It's that starvation diet makes you so easily cross. Oh, Ursie, why are we muddling like this? Life's idiotic."

A shaft of moonlight splotched a corner of the dressing table, illumining the rubber roller.

"How dare you touch my wife!" said Alan, shook his fist at the hated rival, and went from the room.

But it was not the rubber roller, the eye-

the rubber roller.
rival, and went from the room.

brow tweezers, nor the voice of the gramophone braying physical instructions from an upstairs room that finally persuaded Alan Gillingham to seek sympathy and consolation in some other place than his home. It was the new portable Turkish bath and the new weight-reducing electrical outfit Ursula installed that drove him forth in search of sympathy.

" I'm damned," he complained in extenuation, " I'm damned if any man is to be satisfied with just so much of his wife as sticks out of the top of a canvas box."

He found the sympathy he needed in complete contrast—a tiny Mayfair sitting-room with bulgy sofas and dozens of swollen cushions which belonged to Lady Augusta Deane.

Gussie Deane was a little dumpling of a woman with a heart of gold and the sort of smile that is rarely seen outside a baby's crib. She had an infallible gift of recognizing those men or women who were in need of her. Having recognized them, she carried them off to her puffy parlour and stuffed them with muffins and comforting words.

She had apprehended Alan's need for some while, but it was not until a youthful nephew of hers had declared his affection for one of Alan's prettiest pinkies that she put out her nets and drew him in.

" Dear boy," she said, for although she was not yet forty she adopted a maternal way of talking, " it's all very well for you to light bonfires in very juvenile hearts, but unless you take care you won't be able to blow them out when you want to."

Alan had already marched a few steps towards this understanding.

" You're dead right, Gussie," said he, spreading himself on the bulgy sofa and reflecting what an admirable portrait of his hostess could be described with a pair of compasses, " but I'm at ragged ends and angles with the world."

Gussie's shoulder and round, chubby arm was temptingly lean-againstable as it strayed out to collect his tea-cup.

" Tell me about it—or don't if you'd rather not," said she.

He did not feel impelled to talk in those surroundings—not because he could not trust her with his confidences, but because she lulled him into an easy silence. Her emanations were relaxing —like the effect of a warm bath.

" You're a dear soul," he said. " I suppose I was looking for admiration. Men do, you know; it's pretty contemptible, but meaning something to someone goes a long way with a man."

The talk languished, then—

" Life's very queer, Gussie, but women are queerer—so angular."

" Not me," said Gussie, with a smile straight out of the pram.

" No, not you, but you've discovered the secret."

" What secret ? "

" Nature's secret of roundness. The world is round and the good old warm sun—trunks of trees—the march of the seasons—old wine—important things like money—are round—lovely things like women's eyes—and jolly homely things like penny buns and these first-rate muffins of yours. There must be something in it—some motive."

" What's at the back of all this, Alan ? "

" Why do women worry so ? " he asked.

" Worry ? "

" Fight against Nature. Starve themselves. They've got parallel lines on the brain—beastly isolated things that never meet. All the time give me a circle. There's something kind—understandable—about a circle. It comes back home."

" Do you know," said Gussie, " of all the hundreds of men I've met not one has ever invented such pretty excuses for me before. Do you always suit your talk to your hearer ? "

" I was drivelling," he stammered awkwardly, " just drivelling—talking through my hat."

" Then you must be wearing a different kind of hat this afternoon—a bowler very smooth and round, unlike the parallel straight up-and-down collapsible Gibus of the evening flight."

" You're chaffing me."

" Not a bit. I find you're a dear. Come and see me whenever you like. There's always a snug corner and hot muffin for you."

" Dear old Gussie," said Alan, kissed her hand, patted her shoulder, and drifted homeward.

THE continuous opening of her pores under Turkish or electrical influences may be responsible for Ursula having developed a sudden hypersensitiveness, not necessarily to be associated with jealousy. Vaguely, but with increasing certitude, she became aware of a change in Alan's habits of life and demeanour. Whereas he had shown a kind of permanent irritability and displeasure during the earlier stages of her weight-reducing campaign, he now was calm, contented, and bonhomous.

Every wise woman knows that if a man, having received little or no attention from herself, displays evidence of happiness and contentment, it is safe to assume that his beatitude is inspired by some other woman, possibly wiser and more charming than herself.

Thus, with the vanishing of Alan's irritability, Ursula experienced sensations of alarm.

A combination of pride and fear prevented her from asking Alan point-blank why he wasn't miserable and where he spent his time. And so began for Ursula a period of intense melancholy, accentuated by physical lassitude and indigestion, in which she had visions of Alan enjoying the society of some little sapling whose charm and magnetism he was powerless to resist.

In the meantime, Gussie Deane was getting anxious, for Alan's visits were becoming too numerous. Gussie was the last person on earth willingly to alienate the affections of man and wife ; on the other hand, she had no great sympathy for the wife who failed to keep such an easy-going husband as Alan amused. According to her standards any man or any woman was entitled to extract what happiness they could from the world. If they failed in this it was their own look-out. The mere act of marriage did not excuse either party for laziness and did not provide either party with a right to expect something for nothing.

Alan's disloyalty to Ursula was not expressed in words, but in constant visits to another woman—herself.

Gussie's experience of men had inspired no very great belief in their sex as disciples of platonicism. She knew that even the most reliable man, out of misplaced politeness, if for no more elementary reason, sooner or later contrives to tip the apple-cart of friendship into the ditch. Such is their nature, and she had no reason to believe Alan peculiar from the rest of mankind. Presently he would get bored with their harmless companionship and blow up the magazine. And then, of course, she would have to send him packing—and then he would work off his indignation in parlour fireworks at home, and then his wife would start bomb-throwing, and then the lawyers would get to work and a lot of dreadful significances would be attached to a lot of perfectly innocent situations. Finally another good man would go south in search of that admiration which he would no longer merit.

Already she had detected in Alan a growing disposition to possess himself of her hand and caress it lightly while he talked ; and on one or two occasions she had seen a light in his eye which boded ill for their friendship. With the will to avoid any such distressing consequences she took the bull by the horns and without a word to Alan set forth to call upon Ursula.

In answer to her inquiry at the front door, the maid informed her that the mistress was taking a Turkish bath.

"I haven't a chance," she said, "not a chance—wives never have. Especially since he found out that I was getting—dumpy."

"In Jermyn Street?" she inquired.

"No, upstairs, madam."

"Ask her if I may wait."

The request was granted.

Presently Ursula, who had slipped into the first thing to hand, came down.

Her face was white, but her bare arms were pink and hot from the torrid atmosphere from which they had been so recently withdrawn.

"Pretty little arms," Gussie thought; "pretty little body, too. Plump as a quail. I like her. Pity her face looks so drawn and tired."

Aloud she said:—

"I hope you don't think it awful cheek of me, turning up like this?"

Ursula said:—

"Not at all. Do sit down, won't you?"

She thought:—

" What a nice pillowy person ! But fancy letting one's figure go like that. Still, she looks happy with it. I like her."

Gussie bounded into a chair.

" Do you know," she said, " I don't know how to begin. P'r'aps if you'd let me smoke——"

" Do."

Gussie lit a cigarette, tipped with a rose leaf.

" I feel an awful fool," she said, " but it's about your husband."

Ursula's eyes opened.

" Alan ? There hasn't been an accident ? "

" No—not yet. I thought, between us, we might prevent one."

" I don't understand," said Ursula, and her brows went up haughtily.

" He is so very well worth saving."

Ursula did not mean to speak, but curiosity is a powerful force.

" Saving—from whom ? "

" Not so much from as for," Gussie replied. " For you, my dear."

Ursula was silent, on dignity, but the human side of her yearned to confide in the chubby, fat person with the baby-like smile.

" I think we'd better not discuss it," said she.

" Oh, nonsense ! " said Gussie. " It's awfully stupid and stuffy to bottle things up. You know as well as I do that he's—straying."

Suddenly Ursula said :—

" Where is he straying—do you know ? "

Gussie nodded.

" You know the woman ? "

Again Gussie nodded.

" Beast that she is," said Ursula. " I'll hear nothing about her. I can guess what she's like."

" What makes you think you can ? "

Ursula lifted her shoulders.

" I haven't a chance," she said, " not a chance—wives never have. Especially since he found out that I was getting—don't think it rude of me to say this—dumpy."

" Dumpy ? " Gussie repeated.

Ursula ducked her head twice.

" I didn't realize at first—I just tried to alter myself. Then a friend showed me Alan—in a ballroom with wisps of girls all round him. I should have known that it wouldn't end there—that sooner or later he'd desert the safety of numbers for *one*. And he has. I can guess what she's like. You see, I know how his favour lies."

" Describe her," said Gussie.

Ursula's mouth twisted into a smile, her forefinger painted a single line through the air.

" A reed," she said, " a reed."

" You're wrong," said Gussie. " She's me. It's me—I mean, I'm she."

Gripping the arm-rests of the chair, Ursula leaned forward and stared.

" You ? " The word was barely audible.

" Never ! Never ! "

" But it's true."

" Have I gone mad," cried Ursula, " or have you ? How dare you come here with such a story ! *You !* Why, you're four times as fat as I'll ever be."

She rose and gestured wildly up and down the outlines of her form.

" Aah ! " she cried. " I ache all over from pommelling—I tingle all over from electricity—the pores of my skin are as open as a washerwoman's. I've eaten nothing but raw steak and soot biscuits for months. Are you going to tell me I've suffered all this for nothing—that I'm thinning myself away from him instead of fattening myself towards him ? If it's true, as you say it's true, I'll fight you. He sha'n't be yours. I'll let myself go. I'll eat new bread and pork and potatoes and have a lift put in the house, instead of running upstairs. I'll get twice as fat as you are and then we'll see which of us he likes best."

" But, Mrs. Gillingham, my dear," said Gussie, " I want him to like you best. That's what I came here to tell you—that was the whole idea."

For a long minute Ursula stared fiercely into the face of her rival, then with a sigh of utter confidence subsided into her arms.

" There, there," murmured Gussie.

And after a while Ursula said :—

" Oh, aren't you nice and soft just ? "

There is nothing like emotion for stimulating the appetite. Lady Augusta Deane and Mrs. Alan Gillingham devoured an incredible tea together. Five minutes after the tray was taken away, Ursula was still licking the cream from her fingers.

THE influence of good food is benign, and Alan noticed the difference in his wife the moment he entered the house. There was a softness in her eyes and smoothness in her cheeks, a general cuddlesomeness in her form.

Rather nervously, for every man is fearful of rebuff, his hand strayed out towards her, and, as she made no sign, he stooped and kissed the scented hollows at the back of her ears. Ursula's arms went round him and her finger-tips travelled lightly up the back seam of his coat, which, I believe I mentioned, is an osteopathic form of endearment very delightful to experience.

After that their affections became intensive.

" Why not let's be ourselves and chuck away all that apparatus ? " he suggested, breathlessly.

" I have," said Ursula.

Putting in the Pep

By

COSMO HAMILTON

Illustrated by
E. P. KINSELLA

DEPRESSION lay like a fog on that group of tired and anxious men.

"And Then What?" the revue which had been concocted by them all over a period of months, with pain, wrangles, and honest elbow-grease, had been produced the night before at a theatre in Shaftesbury Avenue. They were unable to dodge the disastrous truth that it had fallen upon the hard boards of the stage like a damp squib.

Although it had been tried on the provincial dog in the usual haphazard way, everything had gone wrong at the opening and nerves had cramped the cast. Some of the scenery had not arrived. A large basket of essential costumes had gone eternally astray. The leading lady had picked up a microbe which had attacked her one weak spot and given her laryngitis and a blazing temperature. Her wonderful high note, worth forty pounds a week, had never once been reached. She had taken the fence with the greatest pluck and had knocked off the top bar at every one of her jumps. It was most unfortunate.

"Have a man with a whip on one side of the stage and one with a gun on the other. Frighten the chorus into action."

Copyright, 1927, by Cosmo Hamilton.

There stood Jake Joshki, a dynamic person, short, fat, abrupt.—

Other accidents which are inevitable to a first night had delayed the rise of the curtain for nearly half an hour. The usually good-natured audience had been impatient and unforgiving. Big Ben had struck twelve before the final curtain had descended with a cold, resounding thud.

The house was then half empty. The critics had hurried away. With far too many unsold boxes of chocolates the programme girls had turned down their thumbs and departed for the Tube, with a verdict of failure stamped upon their brows. The backer, the impresario, the three authors of the book, the four concocters of lyrics, the seven musicians, the men who had staged the dialogue and the dances had slunk away to their respective lairs with their tails between their legs. They had been utterly unable, optimists as they were, to bid each other good night with the faintest gleam of hope.

Then, too, with great unkindness, Nature had burst into tears—a very passion of tears. Little torrents of water had rushed along the gutters so that taxis had been scarce, buses crowded, and Tubes reeking with the unpleasant aroma of wet clothes.

Donald Stack, the irresistible rhymester, wet but witty, had altered the title on the way home to "And Now What?" as well he might. It was obvious to everyone that unless some drastic steps were taken thirty thousand pounds would follow the rain wherever it is that rain goes and there would be nothing to show for them but great fatigue, the most distressing disappointment, and a deplorable waste of effort and ingenuity.

Here they were now at eleven o'clock in the morning—extremely early for people connected with the stage—in the office of the manager, the genial Tubby Cope. The theatre was an old one, built in the days when land was not so valuable as it has become to-day. The consequence was that the room had dignity and space. It had, too, the peculiarly unstable and fluctuating atmosphere that goes with a room in and out of which, after too brief periods of tenancy, all sorts of different men had come with puffed-out chests and gone like pricked balloons. Some of the furniture was old and therefore very nice. The rest of it was modern and merely comfortable. The pictures, which had been left upon the walls by the various managers who had gone broke during their unsuccessful efforts to compete against the changing taste of the public and the ever-increasing number of large and garish cinemas, showed conspicuously different tastes.

There was, for instance, a photograph of Irving as King Lear, and another of Beerbohm Tree in the hairy *rôle* of Svengali. One saw the beautiful face of Ellen Terry as Ophelia, the chubby countenance of

Charles Hawtrey as Lord Algy, the mobile features of Seymour Hicks as the young Duke in "The Catch of the Season," and a photograph of Watts's delicious portrait of Lily Langtry which represented her in the first glorious flush of irresistible loveliness. Among all these were the highly-coloured and somewhat indiscreet ladies by Jan Van Beers and the even more scantily-covered feminine persons cut from the back and front pages of *La Vie Parisienne*.

Here, among clouds of cigarette smoke and indecision, sat the little army who had swotted so hard to "put over" the latest musical piece. Their depression had been rendered heavier by the newspaper notices, which were very bad indeed. The consensus of opinion—uniquely unanimous for once—was that the

—The little army who had swotted so hard to "put over" "And Then What?" rose together and bowed.

piece had been put on at least a month too soon. It needed drastic changes. The pruning knife was required on both its lumbering acts. Its tonsils and appendix should be cut out without delay, together with half-a-dozen of its skits on current plays. There should be grafted on to it other and better dancing numbers, at least half-a-dozen song hits, one or two comedians who knew how to make hilarious bricks out of musical-comedy straw, and if the agents' offices, all too crowded, were combed for a prettier chorus the thing might have a chance. Otherwise . . . " Oh, my hat, so to speak," said Donald, who had left strange phrases and hilarity, as it seemed to him, a hundred miles behind. Much the same words had been said the night before by the disgruntled programme girls who had so deeply resented having been kept in the theatre half an hour beyond their usual hour of escape.

The backer was not present. At that moment he was seated in the sitting-room of his racing stables at Angmering studying " Form at a Glance," the Bible of his life. But the manager, dear old Tubby, was there —" very much there : not ectoplasm, worse luck." " Yes," he said, continuing a line of dismal thought ; " yers, yep, and yeah— to make use of three words in the American language which all mean the same thing and which we are likely to hear, but not necessarily to understand, within ten minutes. That is, if Jake Joshki, the pep merchant of Broadway, is a punctual person, about which I have my doubts."

There was a chorus of amazement and fear. What was the idea ? Were they going already to confess to utter and dismal defeat ? Were they about to chuck up the sponge and hand themselves over lock, stock, and barrel—to which Donald Stack, who was a stickler as to correct quotation, having once edited the *Isis*, added " and bung "—to an expert in noise, electricity, gymnastics, and high kicking ?

" That's the jolly old idea, laddies," said Tubby, whose words were accompanied by a trickle of gasper smoke which seemed to emerge from the interstices of his corpulence. " I walked about my room until five o'clock this morning thinking—thinking hard. At exactly five minutes past five a brain-wave came to me—what is sometimes known as a hunch, inspiration, or bean nudge. In the darkness of the night the words ' Jake Joshki ' appeared suddenly in multi-coloured letters on the florid wallpaper of my den, sanctum, or cubbyhole. Whereupon, as one who saw the light at the end of the tunnel, I helped myself to a final spot, nip, or jerker, and crept into the cold sheets. In point of fact, laddies, to bring a long and dismal story to a close, I have hired the jazz-wizard to apply his gifts of navigation to a sinking ship, barge, or brig I got on the 'phone to him this morning after the usual spat with the operator, made a proposal, received an answer which I couldn't understand, and gathered simply that he would attend this meeting this morning with a view to putting in the pep."

He added the laconic word ' Come " in answer to an imperative knock upon the door.

It was not merely opened ; it was flung back, so that its ancient hinges groaned and creaked and all the pictures on the walls quivered with hysterical anticipation of impending shocks. And well they might, indeed.

THERE stood Jake Joshki, making a noise like an aeroplane flying low over a long roof of corrugated iron. A dynamic person, short, fat, abrupt, with an unlighted cigar retained in place by very efficient teeth, two of which were gold, with pinkish hair and eyebrows, small bright eyes like those of a chipmunk (squirrel or stoat), and a line of shirt showing above a pair of much too short trousers held in place by a narrow belt with a large silver buckle on which the initials J. J. were intertwined in a loving embrace. He wore a small metal order in his buttonhole, in which there were diamonds, catching sight of which the manager mentally placed him as an Elk, Buffalo, or Bison, or it might be an Eagle, Hawk or Penguin. What did it matter ? He found himself speculating, however, as to what he did on Rose Day when the little slit in Joshki's lapel was permanently occupied.

He said, rising to his feet—curiously small feet, on which, being worried, he had placed his evening shoes—" Mr. Joshki, let me introduce Mr. This, That, T'other, and Such, etcetera, etcetera, and so forth. You've probably seen the programme and the bills."

The authors of the book, the lyrics, the wisecracks, the makers of the jingles, sentimentals, and tiddly bits, the directors of the book, the skits, and the dancing movements, the designers of the scenery and the costumes, rose together and bowed.

Joshki threw his cigar from one side of his mouth to the other, waved a spatulate hand, murmured something which sounded like " Ledsgetonwidut," and sat.

As he did so he opened his funny little coat and disclosed a waistcoat which he only wore because he was in London, a city which suffered from weather. One top pocket of this was filled with fat cigars and the other with a line of self-filling pens which looked like organ pipes. Then he

brought out several envelopes and began to sort them as though they were a poker hand. Seeing that they were covered with notes, Tubby Cope bent forward eagerly and said: "Then you saw the piece last night?"

"Yerbetcher," was the answer, which, rather cleverly, he made out to be "I did." On the end of this a word was added, a Broadway word that confirmed his worst suspicions and summed up the scathing and hastily written criticisms which had appeared in the morning papers. It was a horrid word. It was a word which should be erased by law from the vocabulary of every self-respecting man. It was "lousy," in point of fact.

A shudder ran through the bodies of all those worried men. The manager swallowed hard, ran a damp hand over his thinning hair, and recrossed his rather fat legs. In the suave manner which it was his habit to adopt to undoubted leading ladies, men who seemed to be wealthy, and Mr. James Agate, he asked Mr. Joshki to elaborate his reactions.

Shattering noises made by a large combination of saxophones, banjos, and cans, with a spotlight thrown upon the various exponents of Negro futurism.

He loved the word "reactions." He also was very fond of talking about complex, inhibition, vitamin, rhythm, sadism, and aftermath. In his infrequent moments of leisure he made a point of improving his mind by reading the works of our younger novelists, who have a way of chasing such words as these through their plotless stories with a view, probably, to giving them false weight. He hadn't the remotest idea what they meant, and often said "vitamin" when he meant "rhythm," which impressed people very much.

Pulling himself together, Joshki indulged in an outburst which nobody understood. During this he worked his unlighted cigar from side to side in a manner which Donald Stack found extremely fascinating. At the end of what appeared to be the most valuable list of hints and improvements the manager sprang to his feet.

"Excuse me just a moment," he said, going to the door. "I'll get an interpreter."

If Joshki had had a punchball flung at his head for no apparent reason he could not have been more surprised. Looking at the various faces of those men in that wide, silent, and tragic circle with an expression of utter amazement, he spoke with incredulous clearness.

"Interpreter—for *me?* Why, I'm the only one in this room who speaks English without an accent. Whadsthedolgarnfellahmean, I'llasktheworld?"

It was Donald Stack who ventured to reply. His more or less recent experiences at Oxford, where he had spoken at the Union on several occasions for and against great national problems of which he knew less than nothing, gave him the necessary courage.

"It isn't so much a question of accent, my dear Mr. Joshki," he said, with that subtle touch of caricature invariably adopted by a member of Worcester when he puts on the Balliol manner, "as of intonation and phrasing. It is, so to speak, your attack, the charming but slightly gymnastic way in which you manage your tonsils, and the fact, too, that you throw in words which are quite unknown to Webster and Johnson—Blackbird words, if you follow me."

Joshki did not follow him.

"Ahdon'tgetyer," he replied.

At which point, to the enormous relief of all concerned, Mr. Cope came back. He brought with him his assistant property man, who had, in the old good days before the advent of films, toured the United States

in leading Shakespearean *rôles*. He was introduced to Jake Joshki as Mr. John Barry Garrick, which, oddly enough, was his name. And, by Jove, he looked it, too.

Then followed a scene in which there was an immense amount of underlying drama, with here and there a soupçon of very bitter fun. Joshki's replies to the manager's specific questions as to what was to be done with the play were translated with the greatest gravity and sonority by the ex-Shakespearean star. To the united horror of all concerned, the expert started off by demanding the elimination of the charming overture. He called it "gastly bunk." What was wanted, he said, although he didn't use these words, was a collection of shattering noises made by a large combination of saxophones, banjos, and cans, with a spotlight thrown upon the various solo exponents of Negro futurism. Then he came to the sketches, into the writing of which Stack and his associates had injected wit, a subtle undergraduate humour, and a nice irony. "Outherwholedarnedbunch." Into the gaps made by this wholesale slaughter he recommended the replacement of eccentric dancing numbers by spineless men and women with indiarubber legs—the sort of

Spineless men and women with indiarubber legs.

people who squirm about on the dirty boards of the stage, climb in and out of their various limbs, turn incredible somersaults, and retire to roars of applause after having broken each other's backbones and stirred up the theatre dust in triumphant clouds.

Then he arrived at the songs. Under his reconstruction scheme not one of them could remain. He wanted such things as "Whattleahdue," "Mababy'sgottheblueyedbluedy-blue blues" and "ComeonoutwithMuneyun-watchtherfechersuvthermune." Upon which everyone present cried out: "But all these things are old! They've all been done before."

"That's why," said Mr. Joshki. "Surefirehitsy'see."

And so it went on and on. At the end of this dire but useful meeting, held to rescue the backers' money, give continued work to a large number of worthy and loyal artistes, and provide royalties to that hard-working group of men who had striven to put together their most original ideas, everything good had gone. The great wizard of Broadway demanded a reconstruction made up entirely of sketches, numbers, dances, lighting effects, ensembles, and horrid sounds which were to be pinched lock, stock, barrel, and bung—and, as the manager naturally added, "rod, line, reel, and sinker"—from all the recent successes of England and America. Only the slightest possible variations were to be made in them. "That's what they *all* are," he said, according to his interpreter. "Originality means failure, a departure from the standardized pattern spells immediate defeat. Give 'em what they're used to over and over again, and give it 'em so quick and with such a deafening roar that they won't have time to recognize what they're listening to. Have a man with a whip on one side of the stage and one with a gun on the other. Frighten the chorus into action. Put fear into the hearts of the comics and wind into the band. It's called 'putting in the pep.'"

It is hardly necessary to say that at this moment "And Then What?" is so great a success that it is necessary to book seats at least three months in advance. And if you were to go round to the theatre in Shaftesbury Avenue and ask the now smiling manager how the piece had lived down the bad notices and become so popular, he would say to you: "Pep, Zyp, or Zim, laddie, to say nothing of crash, chaos, and shimmies."

Strong Measures

By

ANTHONY PARSONS

Illustrated by
W. R. S. STOTT

THAT the Dutchman was disgruntled seemed evident from the way he slammed down the lid of the big chest.

"Here!" he growled, holding out a suit of a cut fashionable, perhaps, in Cecil Rhodes's day. "What about these? Will they do?"

"Fine!" pronounced Dick Sandling, determined not to be put out by his host's boorishness. He laid the trousers against his legs. "Fit me like a bally glove, eh?"

"Humph! Got all you want?"

"Everything, thanks," answered Sandling, sweetly. "And a darned sight more than I ever expected!" he added under his breath, as, without another word, the Dutchman turned and left him.

"Funny kind of chap," was his thought as he stripped off his sodden clothes. His mind ran over the events which had led up to his practically forcing himself upon this surly Dutchman for a night's lodging. He thought of the light, which, while serving to guide him from the jungle to this lonely house, had been so uncompromisingly put out at the precise second in which he had knocked at the door for admission. "There's one thing about it," he told himself, as he wrung out his soaking puttees and festooned them across the bottom of the bed to dry, "it's pretty obvious that he didn't want me here!"

He picked up the coat the Dutchman had so grudgingly lent him, and for the first time noticed a large hole in its back. A jagged hole it was, and with its edges badly iron-moulded, and since the Dutchman had not thought to provide him with a dry shirt it meant that his bare back would be thus prettily exposed.

"Ah, well," was his cheerful comment. "Good soldiers never look behind!" But as his fingers came to the buttons, and encountered a small, round, neatly-punched hole lying exactly in the centre of the breast, he stopped dead, a startled look replacing the dry humour in his eyes.

Dick Sandling was not a nervous man, nor yet a man over-given to introspection, but as he stripped off that coat and studied the two holes in juxtaposition, he was aware of a distinctly quickened pulse. It didn't need an expert eye to realize that somebody had been shot while wearing that coat, and a very cursory examination of the relative position of those holes showed him at once that that somebody had been most assuredly killed.

"Feels like a shroud!" he muttered, as he put on the coat again. He ran his fingers through his hair, wiped his face on his handkerchief, but all the time he was thinking of the Dutchman's queer lack of welcome. "He didn't want me to come here," he thought. "Why?"

It was a very uneasy man who, ten minutes later, walked slowly into the middle room to rejoin his host.

The Dutchman was sitting at the table in exactly the same position as when he had first discovered him. His long, matted beard overflowed his chest, while his fingers lay tightly interlocked upon the table.

"So!" he growled, as Sandling came into the circle of light cast by the hurricane lamp. "They fit you, eh? Draw up that chair yonder, and sit down. I suppose you'll want a drink?"

Sandling nodded. He felt he did need a drink, and, moreover, needed it strong. The discovery of those holes had not only given him a nasty shock, but had actually engendered a vague suspicion in his mind. Twenty years of jungle wanderings had carried him into many strange camps, but

in all his experience he was able to recall no such lonely house as this, nor any such queer character as the mysterious hook-nosed Dutchman who was his host.

"Water?"

He shook his head.

"I'll have it neat, thanks. Here's how!"

The Dop was strong. It went down his throat like liquid fire, and when he had recovered from the fit of coughing consequent upon its unexpected rawness, he felt considerably better for it.

The Dutchman, however, had not joined him.

"Tell me," he asked, as Sandling's eye caught his. "Why did you come here?"

"Why did I come here?" Sandling repeated the question in surprise. "I've already told you that three times. I've told you how I left my safari at midday in order to follow up an elephant spoor, and how, as luck would have it, I not only didn't get the elephant but lost my safari as well!"

"Yes; but how did you come to find *me?*"

"I saw your light from the jungle," explained Sandling. "The light," he added, bluntly, "which you so hospitably doused when you heard my foot on the doorstep."

"But did you come to find *me?*" persisted the Dutchman, in no way disconcerted by this revelation of his boorishness.

"To find you!" Sandling stared. "Why the devil should I come to find you?"

"But did you?"

"Good Lord, no! I hadn't the foggiest notion that there was another white man within a couple of hundred miles of me."

"Then you were lost?"

"Was—and, for that matter, still am!"

"And you didn't know I lived here?"

"Hadn't the very foggiest notion."

"And you didn't come here to find me?"

"Holy Moses!" Sandling crashed his fist on the table so that the tin cups rattled. "Haven't I already said so, a score of times? What the dickens are you getting at? What are you *afraid* of?" he asked, softly, a sudden thought of those holes coming back to his mind.

"I'm afraid," admitted the Dutchman, "I'm afraid that you are a police officer."

"Eh?" With a startled look in his blue eyes Sandling sat bolt upright. "A police officer?" he stammered. "Now, why the devil should you think that?"

The Dutchman's eyes flickered and fell under the other's earnest scrutiny.

"Because it so happens that my last visitor was a police officer," he admitted.

"Was he—so?" Sandling was beginning to see daylight. No wonder the fellow had been so slow to let him in. He was beginning to catch the drift of those persistent questions now. To understand something of what was in the fellow's mind.

"And, curiously enough," volunteered the Dutchman, "he came on just such a night as this."

"Did he?" Sandling tried to keep all trace of excitement from his voice: "Er—why did he come here?"

"To arrest me."

"What for?" And in spite of himself the question was like a pistol-shot in its abruptness.

"Murder!" shrugged the Dutchman, his yellow teeth exposed in a cheerless smile.

"Murder?"

"Yes. He didn't say what he'd come for, of course, but I guessed it even before he had time to speak." He glanced across at Sandling's horror-stricken face before adding: "And, curiously enough, I thought for a moment that you were the same man."

Sandling merely shook his head. Speech, at that precise moment, was utterly beyond him.

"Of course you aren't," agreed the Dutchman, smilingly. "I know you aren't. You can't be. I buried that one."

"Buried him?" gasped Sandling. "You——"

"Yes," interrupted the other's easy voice. "I shot him!"

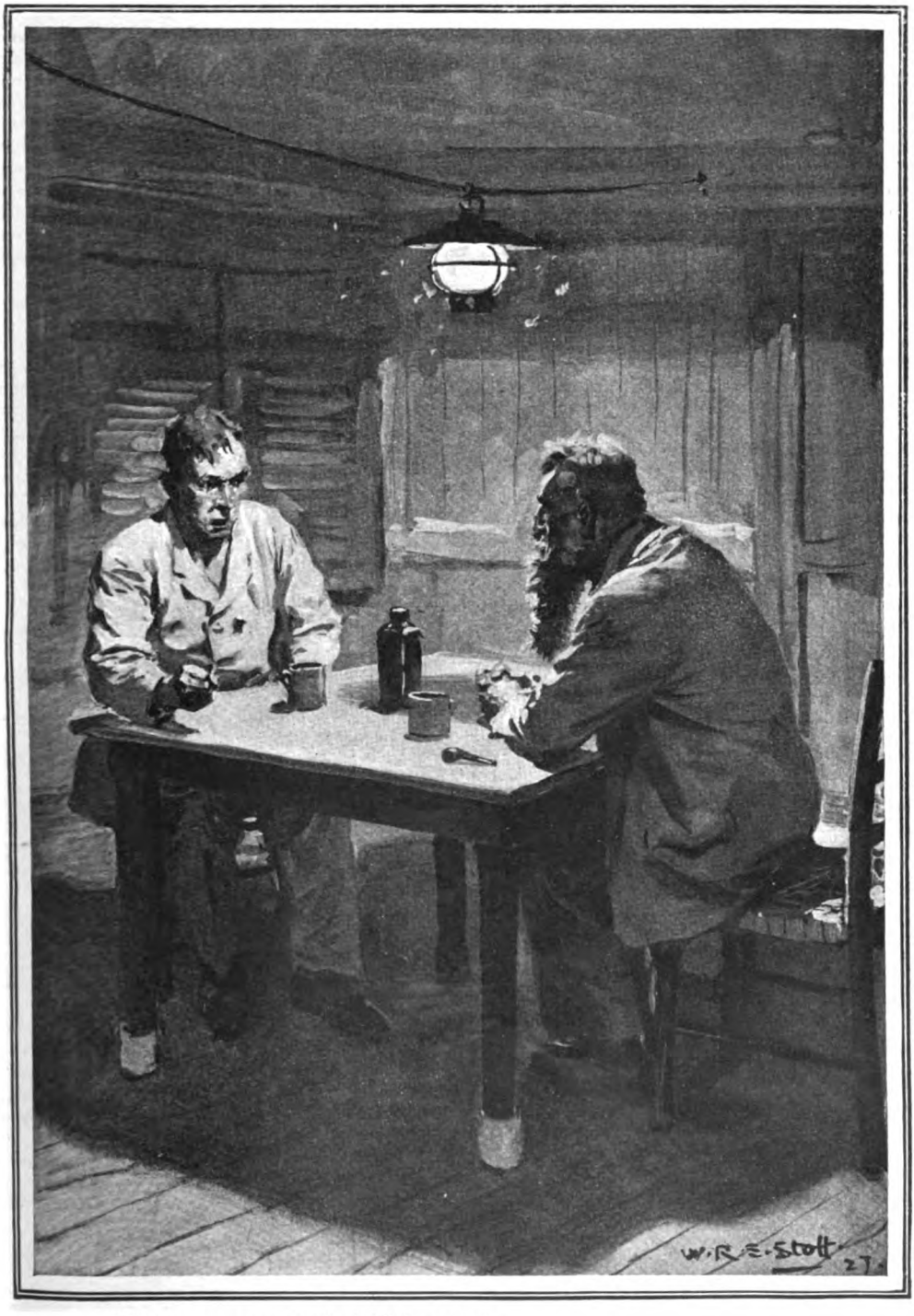
SANDLING'S jaw dropped. For what seemed to him to be hours, he sat there utterly bereft of words, bereft even of the power of thought. His eyes followed the Dutchman's fingers as they calmly filled a pipe, noticing—but attaching no importance to—the extraordinarily calloused condition of his hands.

"Yes," he went on presently, "and it was just such another night as this when he came. I lent him the same suit that you're wearing now, he said it would fit him like a bally glove, he took his drink neat, and when he drank it he said, 'Here's how!' You see the similarity between you?"

"Wore—the same—suit?" jerked out Sandling. His brain was in a confused whirl. Either he had misunderstood, or else the monster across the table was coolly confessing not to one but to *two* murders. His fingers lifted nervously to those holes in his borrowed coat.

"Yes," confirmed the Dutchman. "That's where I got him. It wasn't bad shooting, considering the poor light."

Sandling winced, as his fingers fell away. To his heated imagination it seemed as though a shot had actually torn its way through his own flesh. Those holes were scorching him. He had a wild desire to tear the coat from his back and to dash it into the other's evil face. How right he



"What are you afraid of?" he asked.
"I'm afraid," admitted the Dutchman, "that you are a police officer."

had been as to the portent of those holes. How right about the house, and about its murderous occupant.

"I buried him over by the big baobab tree, just outside the clearing," mentioned the Dutchman with that same air of imperturbable calm. "Perhaps you noticed it as you came in—no?"—as Sandling merely stared—"perhaps you wouldn't in the storm, but he's there all right, all safe and snug by the little white gate."

Sandling sat up. He had been debating with himself exactly why the Dutchman should have seen fit to confide in him, and had missed the beginning of that last sentence.

"Little white gate?" he repeated sharply. "What gate?" There was no gate to the Dutchman's compound, and that he knew for a fact. Had he not stumbled all round the place while he had been waiting for someone to open the door to him? "What gate?" he repeated again, a new and amazing suspicion darting through his mind.

The Dutchman's pipe stopped half way to his mouth.

"Eh?" he stammered.

"Which gate?" Sandling's voice had risen to a shout. "There is no gate! You're lying to me. You're pulling my leg. What's your game? Which gate are you talking about?"

"Which gate?" stammered the Dutchman, uneasily. It was plain that he was nonplussed. His eyes darted round the room like those of a trapped animal. He opened his mouth to speak, but apparently thought better of it, for he closed it again.

"Well?" jeered Sandling.

With an obvious effort the Dutchman pulled himself together. He scratched his head bewilderedly. Then, with a tremendous air of secrecy:—

"I'll tell you just what it is," he whispered, wagging a calloused forefinger under Sandling's nose. "That gate is a very funny gate. You can't always see it. It—it puzzles even me—sometimes." He laughed, a queer, cackling, uncanny kind of laugh.

And after a second's blank amazement Sandling began to laugh, too. He wasn't over sure what there was to laugh about, but he felt suddenly weak—and very shaky—and to laugh offered some slight relief. Actually, he realized, there was nothing at all to laugh about. Bush-madness is no laughing matter, and it was crystal clear to him, in those moments, that the wretched Dutchman was mad as a March hare. He had fallen a victim to the infernal loneliness of the bush, that dread spectre which stalks at the heels of every wanderer in the silent places of Central Africa. And presently the laugh died away on his lips, and in a dead silence the two sat eyeing each other across the table.

"Poor devil," thought Sandling, as he watched the Dutchman's fingers nervously locking and unlocking. All that story of the murders was just so much drivel, a figment of a disordered brain—like the little white gate which wasn't there. He couldn't think why he hadn't tumbled to it in the beginning. The thing was clear as daylight. He watched the man nodding his shaggy head—nodding it slowly and rhythmically like some mechanically-operated figure of a Chinese mandarin. "Mad as a hatter!" he thought, as he watched him fumbling in his pocket.

And then his heart missed one complete beat, for in place of the matches for which he had thought him to be searching, the Dutchman had suddenly produced a big revolver.

"Yes," he went on coolly, taking up the tale at that point where it had been interrupted by mention of the gate. "Yes, that's where I got him. I'm a very good shot. Very quick and very straight. Very quick," he added with peculiar emphasis, "and very straight!"

SANDLING sat fascinated. The movement had been so quick, the threat so utterly unexpected, that for a moment he could only stare blankly at that deadly weapon. Too late he saw the error into which he had fallen. Too late he remembered the damning evidence of those holes in the coat he was even then wearing. Slowly the truth dawned in upon his mind in all its ghastly realism. The Dutchman was no harmless loony, no mere bush-idiot, but rather a dangerous, homicidal maniac.

And he was armed.

"And you know," he was saying with obvious relish, "I can put another bullet through that very same hole,"

Sandling's eyes quivered. Looking into the mouth of that revolver he realized that it was touch and go. The slightest movement, the slightest sign of fear, and he knew he would go to join the company in that grave beneath the baobab tree. Forcing his voice to steadiness, he looked the Dutchman straight in the eye.

"I've no doubt you could," he rasped. "But in the meantime—I'm thirsty!" And feigning not to notice the ménace of that levelled revolver, he picked up his tin cup and thrust it directly under the Dutchman's nose. "What about another drink?" he asked.

The ruse worked admirably. His attention thus distracted, the Dutchman lowered his weapon and with his free hand pushed the bottle towards his guest.

"Help yourself," he offered carelessly, at the same time moving his chair a full yard farther back from the table.

Sandling's face was like a mask in its impassiveness. That movement of the Dutchman's chair had defeated his plan to make a sudden lunge for the possession of the gun. Mad as the Dutchman undoubtedly was, he was yet cunning enough to have sensed his danger, and by that move to have put himself beyond the possibility of attack. It was now only too clear just how those others had met their ends, and Sandling began to cast round in his mind for some means by which he could escape the same fate. At all costs he must get hold of his rifle. His fingers were itching to feel its stock. With that in his hands he would be in a position to handle the madman. But how to get it? How to get into that inner room without arousing the other's quick suspicions?

"I don't like visitors," remarked the Dutchman presently, breaking the long silence. "They come here to spy. I've lived here for a good many years now, and nobody knows—nobody knows."

Sandling actually shivered. It needed no particularly incisive intelligence to realize exactly *why* nobody knew. He found himself speculating as to the probable number of wanderers who had stumbled against that house—and had never left it again except to be buried. And gradually a great loathing of the mad Dutchman began to obsess his mind. He pictured him as being a loathsome, hairy spider, waiting in his lonely house to devour any unwary traveller who might, fly-like, have the ill-luck to get caught in his web.

Outside the storm was raging with unabated violence. Great gusts of wind were shaking the shutters on their badly-fitting hinges and, coming surging in beneath the door, were tossing the hurricane lamp to and fro on its string. Sandling's fingers were aching for the feel of his rifle. Somehow he must get hold of it. How? Frantically he sought round in his mind for some plausible excuse to leave the room, something that sounded reasonable, but it was the sight of the Dutchman's hand once more creeping round to his pocket which finally spurred him to action.

"Well," he said, conscious of a queer hoarseness in his voice, "if you don't mind I think I'll be getting off to bed. It's been a long day—and—and—and so I think I'll be getting off to bed."

A LONG silence followed his words. He would have liked to get up and move towards the door, but the Dutchman's careless handling of that revolver kept him chained to his chair. He wondered what was passing in the man's mind. What he was contemplating doing. Picking up his tin cup he made a pretence of draining it, and then, with a tremendous effort, rose shakily to his feet.

The Dutchman rose too, and for a second stood regarding him warily.

"Very well," he said at last. "Just as you like." He lifted down the hurricane lamp from where it hung suspended above his head, and with totally unexpected civility handed it to his guest. "You'd better take this with you," he said. "Maybe you'll need it, and I can manage without it. Er—good night!"

"Good night!" stammered Sandling, amazed at his easy victory. Taking the lamp from the other's outstretched hand he walked backwards towards the grass door, keeping a wary eye on that revolver. Nothing happened, however, and a moment later he had reached the temporary safety of the inner room.

"Ah!" he breathed, as he snatched up his rifle and ran his hands lovingly over its worn stock. Now he was all right. Thank God he had been able to get hold of that. With a sigh of relief he turned to close the door behind him, for it was in his mind to change into his own clothes and then boldly walk out of the house. Not for anything in the world would he spend the night there—so much he had long since decided. Bad as was the jungle outside, he yet preferred it to the uncertainty of being murdered in his sleep. And if the Dutchman tried to stop him—well, so much the worse for him! And with that vicious thought, he rammed a cartridge into the breech.

The bolt shot home with a useless click, offering not the slightest resistance to his touch. Staggered, he wrenched it back again—only to find himself staring into an empty magazine. For a moment he was absolutely paralyzed. There had been five rounds in there when he had laid it down. Five rounds! Swallowing the panic that threatened to unman him, he poked his finger up the barrel, felt round the bottom of the magazine, frantically searched through all his pockets. And slowly a feeling of utter helplessness began to take possession of his mind. The Dutchman had been one too many for him. By some means or other he had managed to steal those cartridges, and so leave him defenceless. And just as those others had been put out of the way, so would he be put out of the way, unless——

With a sudden desire to know what was going on in the next room he crept across to the door and, parting a few strands of the grass, peered through. The Dutchman was sitting exactly as he had left him, revolver

Parting a few strands of the grass, he peered through. The Dutchman was sitting exactly as he had left him, revolver in hand, staring across at the opposite wall.

in hand, staring across at the opposite wall. So far, then, he had made no move, and Sandling was just about to close the aperture when his eye was attracted to several pencil-like rays of light coming, apparently, from the dividing wall. He stared at those rays for a moment, puzzled, and then the truth dawned in upon his mind.

The light was from his own lamp, and the Dutchman had drilled the dividing wall so that he could see through into the inner room.

With a sharp catch in his throat, Sandling backed away. It was suddenly plain as a pikestaff not only what was in the madman's mind, but also how he intended carrying it out. With frantic haste he caught up the remainder of his clothes and, putting them where he could easily lay hands on them, turned down the light. The lamp creaked loudly, and simultaneously, from the other room, came the sounds of someone moving.

That lent speed to his already flying fingers. With a feeling akin to nausea he tore off that fateful coat and flung it across the room, and a second later the trousers followed suit. Sweat was pouring down his face as he dragged on his own clothes and, with fingers that trembled awkwardly, wound the soaking puttees round his bare legs. Was the Dutchman watching him, even then, through one or other of those holes ? Could he see him sufficiently clearly to shoot ? He had spoken of the bad light —Sandling realized what he had meant then. Every instant he expected to see the barrel of the revolver come poking through the wall. Every hole, every cranny, every little crevice seemed to his heated imagination to be but the frame of a murderous eye.

At last he was dressed. With no clear plan in his mind he tiptoed back to the door and, opening the grass, peeped through. Blinking his eye he looked again, looked this way and that, up and down.

The Dutchman had gone.

For a moment he stood staring in the most utter bewilderment. There were only two rooms in the house, and the Dutchman was in neither. Where, then, was he? A swift glance at the tightly-fitting shutters of his room showed him that he had nothing to fear from that direction, and once again he applied his eye to the door. And then he saw. There was one little bit of the room which, owing to the thickness of the grass through which he was spying, seemed to be out of his range. It was the bit lying along the dividing wall, and the instant he realized that he knew where the madman was hiding. He was standing close pressed to one of those holes.

To which?

Sandling's nerves were going. He was literally dripping perspiration as he tried to look in every direction at once. From one of those holes the madman was watching him. Every second he expected to hear the roar of that revolver, to feel the sting of the soft, flattened bullet. The thought of the size of that hole in the back of the white duck coat filled him with a horrible nausea. He was waiting there to be shot down, to be shot down like a rat in a sewer.

But was he? Not if he knew it! With a tremendous effort he pulled himself together. He still had the empty rifle in his hands, and if only he could get within clubbing range of the madman—before he had time to fire—he could yet give a pretty useful account of himself. That was the right idea, he decided. To get at him while he was least expecting an attack.

Very softly he opened the grass door and listened. No sound whatever was coming from the darkened room. Could he have been mistaken about those holes? Was the room empty after all? Gripping his rifle firmly in both hands he took a tentative step forward. Paused—listened—took another step——

The room was empty.

And then he sprang to the door. Gone was all attempt at concealment, gone was all caution, only he knew that beyond that door lay safety. With fingers that fumbled

in their eagerness he dragged out the bars. Once he thought he heard a whisper behind him, once he thought he heard a cry, and—as the door came crashing down to let in the full blast of the storm—he thought he heard a wild, demoniacal laugh.

But by that time he was running, running like one possessed.

He couldn't see where he was going, cared nothing for his direction, so long as he put as great a distance as possible between himself and that murderous Dutchman. Once only did he pause, and that was when, blanketed by the murk of mist and rain, he heard the unmistakable crack of a pistol-shot.

"And I wasn't there!" he panted, triumphantly. But the storm tore the breath from his lips and sent his yell of defiance hurtling and swirling away into the night.

"HAS the bwana gone?"

The Dutchman looked up from his writing.

"Oh, it's you, Mattamulla, is it?" he asked. "You heard my shot, then?"

"*N'dio*, bwana,' answered the smiling boy. And looking round the room, "Has the bwana gone?" he asked again.

"Yes," said the Dutchman, gravely. "He's gone. But you'd better tell the boys to keep close to their compound to-morrow. He may come back—he was a bit difficult—but I don't think he will."

"*Umepiga?*"

He was running like one possessed.

The Dutchman shook his head.

"No, I didn't beat him, Mattamulla. I—what the Englishmen term—led him right up the garden!" he explained. "'When the corn bins are full,' as the old saying goes, 'it is wise to keep out the rats!'"

"Even so, bwana," agreed the boy, laying five cartridges on the table. "The bwana was surprised to find his gun empty," he chuckled.

"And Heaven knows you made enough noise in getting through that window," growled the Dutchman. "I heard you very plainly." He turned to his books again, and with a satisfied smile: "Mattamulla," he remarked, "last month we panned a shade over forty-three ounces of the finest gold. It is our record month, so far."

"Good, bwana!" The boy had started to make preparations for a belated meal. "And there's plenty more in the stream, even yet!"

"If only we can keep the rats away from it," assented the miner. "Oh, and by the way, Mattamulla, while I think of it, you'd better set on a boy to mend that gate which used to stand by the big baobab tree. I'd forgotten that you'd taken the thing away. I very nearly came to grief over that gate. What? Oh, yes; wash the old suit and put it ready for the next one!"

History Repeats

By

A. M. BURRAGE

Illustrated by
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WHEN the World—and by the World I mean those people who can afford to amuse themselves in the more expensive places of entertainment—began to notice that young Francis Wake was in constant attendance on Sylvia Shoreby, it shook its head in pleasurable anticipation at seeing a young man riding for a fall.

Francis Wake was in one of those superfluous Government Departments whose existences are for ever being threatened, but which, nevertheless, continue like the brook in the poem. He lived with his mother in a tiny house in Croydon—or was it Purley? At least, it was one of those places in which strangers never stop, but drive their cars through as hastily as the local regulations allow. He was one of those hopelessly average people for whom garden cities, spats, cheap season tickets, and five-shilling dances at assembly rooms are specially provided. He was ordinarily nice-looking, and he was not overburdened with brains or with initiative. He was a hundreds-a-year man and never likely to be more.

Nobody could say for certain where he met Sylvia Shoreby. Some say it was at a golf club, others at a seaside hotel. Nor could anybody say exactly how or why he attracted and amused her. But she took him into her own set, almost holding him by the hand and running with him, as children bring up to their parents some attractive new acquaintance.

Sylvia was typical of post-war maidenhood, a hairpin of a girl who wore rather less than twice as much as a cannibal princess. One was not left to speculate as to whether she had knees; she called strangers by their Christian names, and kissed young men without hesitation; she used a lipstick publicly, and read and discussed all the books which were considered unfit for her aunts. Still metaphorically holding young Wake by the hand, she rushed him into night clubs, dance halls, and smart restaurants, introduced him to all sorts of people whose names he had read in the paper, and paid her share of the expenses like a man.

And the world smiled tolerantly at the stranger from Mars—or Croydon, or Purley, or wherever it was—and wondered how Sylvia's "latest" would take it when he found himself suddenly dropped. For it was apparent to these onlookers, who thought they were seeing most of the game, that the dull and serious young man was devoted to Sylvia, and that Sylvia would turn and rend him as soon as his devotion became too apparent. Besides, said they, even if Sylvia were really smitten by this strange denizen of another world—and queer things like that were apt to happen—old man Herbert would soon put his foot down on that.

SYLVIA was the youngest of the three children of Sir Herbert Shoreby, who also had two sons, the honest one in the Army and the other on the Stock Exchange. Before the war he had attained only to that financial status which is called being comfortably off, but he had made so much out of the country during its years of peril that the country, to show its gratitude for the manner in which he had helped to ease its burden of wealth, and its contrition for making him uncomfortably off, could scarcely do less than bestow a knighthood on him. Sir Herbert bore his title with dignity and a certain brooding sense of injustice, born of the knowledge that a friend of his had bought a baronetcy for less.

Sir Herbert was a widower, large and well-nourished and red and easy-going, and in the main he was kindly. He gave Sylvia full liberty and a good allowance and a latch-key, but mostly for the sake of complying with the customs of the new age. For her he had social ambitions. His day-dreams were haunted by visionary cuttings from *The Morning Post* and photographs in

The Tatler, which were to inform a palpitating world that his daughter was the wife or the *fiancée* of Lord Anybody. He was not the kind of man readily to allow Sylvia to make a mésalliance with somebody who was only in his own class; and he held the strings of Sylvia's money-bags. Sylvia was not built for love in a garden city, and sock-darning, and wheeling out her own pram, and going to the pictures. The World which looked on and thought it saw most of the game thoroughly understood all this.

And the World was wrong in certain respects. But it was unable to look through the windows of a taxi which conveyed Sylvia and Francis Wake towards Sylvia's home on a certain fair night of stars. Could it have done so it would have seen that Sylvia's slim arms were around the neck of young Wake, and that young Wake's face, usually not unintelligent, wore the smile of a village idiot who had just been given a bag of sweets.

"Shall I come in and see your father to-night?" asked Francis Wake.

"Hell's bells, no! Have a heart!" said Sylvia.

"But look here, you know, I don't want him to think that I've been behaving in an underhand——"

"He won't think that. I'll tell him. Then he'll drop you a line. Francis, you're a scream and a lamb and a miracle all to the power of *n* and all rolled into one. I never thought I was going to be mushy about anybody, and to think it should be *you* of all people!"

The same wonder had filled Francis Wake, and brought with it awe and reverence. He was fond of reading Meredith, and at another time he might have wished that Sylvia had expressed herself differently; but just then she could do no wrong in his sight.

"What's Sir Herbert like?" he asked, a little uneasily.

"Rather like one of the early Hanoverian kings, I should say, only about twice as pompous."

"In that case, I suppose he will oppose—"

"Oh, naturally!" said Sylvia, yawning. "But that doesn't matter, does it? After all, I'm twenty-one, and he can't rush round forbanning the bids. Besides, that sort of thing simply isn't done nowadays. No, he'll only be just a bit troublesome."

"Anyhow," said Francis, ardently, holding her tightly to him, "it doesn't much matter, does it? I can afford to keep a wife or I shouldn't have—shouldn't have asked you."

Sylvia regarded him fondly but with a kind of horror. Francis was such a quaint lad! He had what she called an early-Victorian complex.

"You know," she said, quite seriously, "you ought to marry a girl who wears long skirts and flannel next her skin, who'd spend her evenings knitting and address you as 'Mr. Wake.' Do you really think, you innocent lamb, that if my parent closed my account at the Post Office Savings Bank I'd come and split a maisonnette with you in Walham Green? Besides, think how I should feel when it got about that Sylvia Wake—I should be Sylvia Wake then, shouldn't I?—was living on her husband. No, my dear, I'd go and open a hat shop. Nearly all my girl friends have got hat shops. But my parent will be reasonable enough after he's had his weep."

Young Wake's early-Victorian complex rebelled at the hat shop. Springing from a long line of doctors, lawyers, parsons, and Government clerks, he had been brought up with a proper contempt for all those engaged in retail trades; and even Sylvia's friends who were Somebodies, and nearly all of whom sold things, had not eradicated the prejudice. However, he could afford to ignore for the time being what was, after all, a remote contingency.

"But look here," he remonstrated, "I don't want your father to think that I want to marry you for your mon——"

"Darling," said Sylvia, with a sigh, "you really ought to dress the part and wear Wellington boots. Besides, anybody who'd ever seen me would acquit you at once of mercenary motives. Even my parent will know better than that."

"And I don't like the idea of your telling him first. I ought to be there. Suppose he starts bullyragging you?"

"He won't," said Sylvia. "I won't pretend that he's a credit to me, but I haven't brought him up entirely for nothing. If he ever tries to start the kind of tactics which used to be endured in the era of samplers and stuffed squirrels I just blow on his nose. Like that! And," she added with infinite satisfaction, "he hates it."

And there, for the time being, the subject was dropped. They had other things to discuss. For instance, Francis wanted to ask Sylvia if she loved him as much as when, two hours since, she had first promised to marry him; and when he had done so, and had his answer, he purred because of the constancy of his beloved. And Sylvia did not mind this sort of thing at all, for her heart, although it had not been hampered by tight lacing, was very much as her grandmother's had been.

NOW Francis's mother was a wise woman, although she lived at Croydon—or Purley. She was quite well aware that Francis was in love with somebody, but

ask you to come up for execution. Sha'n't be with you, except in spirit, as the Downeys are running me up to Newmarket. Don't let him awe you or baffle you. See you Saturday. Lots of love from

"SYLVIA."

Shall I come in and see your father to-night?" asked Francis Wake.

waited patiently to be taken into his confidence. And Francis, wise enough to be aware of his mother's wisdom, unbosomed himself to her at the breakfast table two mornings later. He had just received and read two letters, each in similar blue envelopes with the same crest on their backs.

Naturally he read Sylvia's first. It was brief and pointed.

"*Darling,—As expected, my male parent has flown off the handle. He has seized the quill and the ink-horn to drop you a line and*

Sir Herbert's note was even shorter, and the humour in which he had written was apparent from the fact that one or two of the words were engraved with the point of the pen rather than written :—

"*Dear Sir,—With reference to a conversation I have had with my daughter concerning you, I should be glad if you could make it convenient to call on me at seven o'clock tomorrow.—Yours faithfully,*

"HERBERT SHOREBY."

Even to an unprejudiced eye there can be nothing friendly in the context of the above letter. Nobody could believe that the hand which had pushed the pen was a Glad Hand, eager to project itself in friendship or lift itself in benediction. To Francis the note was frankly menacing. The "Dear Sir" and the "Yours faithfully" were in themselves eloquent. It was ominous that he should have written of Sylvia as "my daughter" instead of calling her by her Christian name. Altogether, Francis thought, it was about as poisonous a missive as any man had ever received from his prospective father-in-law.

He folded up the letter, glanced across the table, and met his mother's gaze.

"Mater," he said, "I'm going to get married."

Mrs. Wake showed no signs of surprise or dismay. She had always known that Francis must some day give her this piece of news, so she reached out for the marmalade and said: "Are you, dear? Who is it?"

Francis told her. He described Sylvia without rhapsodizing over her, because he had learned to fear and respect his mother's sense of humour.

"And now, mater," he concluded, "I want your advice, because Sir Herbert Shoreby is evidently going to cut up rough about it. That's perfectly evident both from her letter and his. I shall go and see him, of course, but what sort of line would you take if you were me? You see, I don't want Sylvia for the sake of her father's money—you know that—but, on the other hand, she's not the kind of girl who could settle down in a small house with one servant and live on my income. It would be cruel to her after what she's been used to, and, besides, she wouldn't do it. Not that she isn't fond of me, but she sees that it wouldn't work. So if the old man parts brass tacks with her she says she's going to open a hat shop."

"A hat shop?" repeated Mrs. Wake. "That's a good idea."

"Do you think so, mater? I don't. Of course, nearly all Sylvia's friends have got hat shops, and I should think they must make a living by buying one another's hats, like the people on the desert island who took in one another's washing. And Sylvia says it's awfully *chic* to be in trade nowadays. But it's one of the subjects on which we don't see eye to eye. I suppose I'm very old-fashioned—Sylvia says I am—and I should hate the idea of my wife working Besides, what with my work and hers, we should hardly see anything of each other. I'm not ashamed of her having an allowance from her father. That would be her money, not mine, and I shouldn't touch a penny of it."

Mrs. Wake considered.

"I should tell him all that, dear, if I were you. May I see his letter?"

"Certainly," said Francis, and handed it across.

Mrs. Wake examined first the crest on the back of the envelope.

"Some sort of a bird, isn't it?" she said. "I wonder why people who get brand-new crests always go in for birds? I'm sure he hadn't a crest at all when I knew him."

Francis stared at his mother with a sudden fixed intensity.

"You—knew—him!" he exclaimed. "Then he'll know all about me!"

Mrs. Wake shook her head and began to read the letter. While she read it she said:—

"I lost sight of him two or three years before I married, and I don't suppose he knows my married name. He was a very stupid boy when he was young; but then, we were both very stupid." She laid aside the letter and smiled. "We used to think we were in love."

Francis sat still and stared.

"You never told me," he faltered.

"Have I not, dear? But, after all, there were a great many unimportant happenings in my remote past of which I must somehow have neglected to tell you. He was nobody then, and very poor; and I, as you know, was the daughter of a celebrated surgeon. I was nineteen at the time and he was twenty or twenty-one. Now he's somebody and we're nobodies. It's a case of Time's revenges, as Browning would have called it."

Francis sat crumbling bread into small crumbs.

"Tell me all about it," he begged.

"OH, it began through my going out to have a music lesson. I used to be allowed to go with the girl next door. Only, you see, she had a love affair and didn't go for her music lessons at all, so I really used to go and come back alone."

"Help!" exclaimed Francis. "Did girls behave like that even in those days?"

"They did," said Mrs. Wake, dryly. "And one evening I was coming home alone when a drunken man followed me and persistently annoyed me. So Herbert came up and hit him in the eye. It was most romantic. That's how we met for the first time.

And of course he insisted on seeing me home."

She paused, and Francis, still crumbling bread, asked for more.

"And what happened after that?" he demanded.

"Oh, after that? I used to go out for my music lesson as usual, but most often I didn't get there. And then Herbert started writing me long letters. And mother found one and handed it to father. And father sent for poor Herbert, and there was a dreadful scene in front of me. And—well, then it all came to an end. Herbert, I remember, made a most impassioned speech to father, but——"

"Did he?" exclaimed Francis, deeply interested. "*Did* he? Er—I suppose you don't happen to remember exactly what he said?"

"I'm not likely ever to forget," said Mrs. Wake, smiling.

And she proceeded to tell him.

SIR HERBERT SHOREBY was not looking forward to the interview with any greater anticipatory pleasure than was Francis. It was all so deucedly difficult. One couldn't kick the fellow out and forbid him to see Sylvia again. Forbidding didn't work in these days, and Sylvia wouldn't stand for it for a moment. No, one had to treat the fellow like a friend—confound him!—give him a whisky-and-soda and a cigar and try to talk him over and shame him if he were a decent sort of chap.

Sir Herbert went so far as to make a few rough preliminary notes. "You don't want to enter a family where you're not wanted." "Ruin Sylvia's prospects." "Wait a little while until you're better off." (Sylvia bound to pick up with somebody else in the meantime.) "If necessary hint that he's after my money, and threaten to stop supplies." Altogether he felt that it wasn't a bad programme.

Francis had only one weapon, and that one was securely hidden in his sleeve. Of course, it might not prove to be effective, but he put his trust in it. He could not help being thankful that Sir Herbert was a widower. It left him with only one foe to down, and he could imagine an indignant mother being a much more formidable enemy.

Punctually at seven o'clock he presented himself at the large house in Lancaster Gate, where the superior man-servant in a check waistcoat, who took his hat and stick, had evidently been warned to expect him.

Sir Herbert Shoreby had set the stage in his library, an impressive room, Turkey-carpeted, with cedar furniture, and stocked with books in very expensive bindings, which he had never found time to read. He greeted the visitor with cold courtesy, looking him up and down, and refraining from offering his hand.

"Will you come and sit down over here," he said, "and then we can talk? I think you'll find that chair comfortable. Will you smoke?" He pushed over a box of Coronas. "I was just going to have a whisky-and-soda. Perhaps you will join me?"

To his relief, Francis accepted both the cigar and the drink. This, thought the host, placed his visitor at a disadvantage. One can't be very rude or very hostile to a man whose whisky one is drinking and whose cigars one is smoking. When the siphon and the matches had done their work, Sir Herbert leaned back in his chair and began without any preamble.

"My daughter has told me of what has passed between yourself and her," he announced, with a throaty cough, "so there is no necessity to—ah—go over that ground again. Of course I know nothing about you, so I can bear you no—ah—animosity. I think Sylvia is far too young to rush into matrimony, but that we can discuss later if necessary. Meanwhile, although parents—ah—do not nowadays receive the consideration which used to be considered their due, I am sure that you will admit that I have some right to inquire your circumstances."

Francis inclined his head.

"You want to know how much I am earning?" Sir Herbert flinched at the coarse word. "Five hundred a year."

"Five hundred a year!" Sir Herbert made a creditable attempt to make it sound like fivepence. "But you have—ah—private means?"

"None. My salary will rise to eight hundred, and when I am sixty, if I live as long, I shall retire on a pension of four hundred."

Sir Herbert secretly rejoiced.

"You have other prospects, of course?" he said, with an air of false sympathy. "Your father, now—is he alive?"

"No, Sir Herbert; he died ten years ago. My mother has an annuity which will die with her. I have already told you my prospects."

The other passed a hand over his forehead.

"And yet," he said, "I think I must have—ah—misunderstood you. Am I really to suppose that you, with five hundred a year, are seriously proposing for the hand of the daughter of a man in my position?"

"I thought Sylvia had told you, sir."

Sir Herbert's face grew a little redder and he began to swell.

"Well, then, sir," he said, sternly, "I shall not waste time, but tell you frankly that I disapprove. I disapprove entirely."

Francis inclined his head.

"I am sorry for that, sir," he said.

'You are not sorry at all, sir. You don't care a damn! My daughter is of age and you think I am powerless. You don't care *that* whether I approve or not! I do not wish to insult you, sir, but a gentleman—ah—a gentleman would hardly wish to make an alliance with a family in which he was not wanted."

"One member of it wants me," said Francis, equably.

"You mean, sir, the wretched girl you have entrapped?"

The thought of anybody entrapping Sylvia was mirth-provoking, and both men simultaneously realized the humour of it.

"I shouldn't have put it that way myself," said Francis. "We just mutually want to get married."

"I see. Well, when you have heard me out you may feel that you mutually don't want to get married. I have one weapon against you and only one, and that is the vulgar weapon of money—which I dare say you affect to despise. If Sylvia persists in this madness, she won't get another ha'penny from me, and then perhaps your—ah—persistence will wane a little."

Francis thought he had better say nothing about the hat shop.

"That is as you please, sir," he said. "I assure you that I don't want your money. Whatever you chose to allow Sylvia, I shouldn't touch it."

Sir Herbert smiled, and he hoped that the irony of that smile would scorch the younger man.

"Then may I ask exactly why you want to marry my daughter?" he demanded.

"We're awfully keen on each other, sir."

The elder man nodded with a fine air of sarcasm.

"'Awfully keen,' eh? It sounds ardent to me! 'Awfully keen!' You might be talking about a brand of cigarettes."

Francis raised himself a little and smiled faintly. His moment had come.

"Oh, I can spread myself if you want me to," he said. "Your daughter is more than my love—she is my life."

SIR HERBERT'S mouth fell open half an inch. The words were strangely familiar. Somewhere, somewhen he had heard them before, and without any variation. And in a moment suspicion grew to certain knowledge that he himself had once uttered them.

"She is all in all to me," Francis proceeded, with only the least delicate air of pantomime. "I see her face in the rose in my buttonhole. Money means nothing to me, food means nothing, rent means nothing. I would starve beside her in a cellar. I cannot live without her—I shall not live without her."

Sir Herbert's face went a very dangerous shade of purple, and beads of sweat sprang up in the corrugations of his brow. A man who has once made an egregious ass of himself is never afterwards permitted by his personal devil to forget the least detail of the occasion. Now, after all those years he still sometimes woke in the night, sweating and swearing, to remember what a fool he had made of himself over Mary Cartwright. His only comfort was that old Cartwright was dead, and probably Mary—if she, too, were still alive—had long since forgotten. Now every word of his, repeated to him with that faint air of mockery, went through him like a cold dagger.

"I am poor," continued Francis, after a brief struggle with his memory, "but I shall rise in the world, and I am at least honest. Before you spurn an honest man's love——"

But he was interrupted. Sir Herbert stood up and roared at him.

"*Damn you—shut up!* Shut up, do you hear, you young devil! I'll knock your head off, you—you——"

"I liked that bit which you pinched out of Swinburne," Francis continued, equably. "'Gold is worth but gold, Love's worth love.'"

Sir Herbert towered above him.

"How did you know?" he demanded, choking.

"It's a small world, sir. My mother's maiden name was Mary Cartwright."

"Mary Cartwright!" He lifted his hands and let them drop. "And she told you? I didn't think she'd have done that. It wasn't playing the game."

"All's fair under certain conditions, and she only told me this morning. Hasn't she a wonderful memory? I had to take it down in shorthand, and I was all day learning it. I know a man who belongs to your club who'll be frightfully amused. You know Slinderby, and how he enjoys a joke, and how he loves to share it with his friends. He embellishes them so well. And Sylvia—Sylvia will simply die——"

Francis was interrupted by another howl from the tortured knight.

"If you dare tell Sylvia," he fumed. "I'll—I'll——"

"Yes," said Francis, "what will you do?"

Rather to his surprise, Sir Herbert thrust out a hand.

"Shut up, do you hear, you young devil!" interrupted Sir Herbert. "I'll knock your head off, you—you——"

"Play the game, my lad," he pleaded. "We've all made fools of ourselves in our time. You have yourself, I expect; and when you reach my time of life you won't care to be reminded of it."

Francis stood up and took the proffered hand, knowing the battle to be won. All that remained now was to send over the mopping-up party to remove the *débris* of the fight and leave the ground clean.

"I'll play the game," he said, "if you will, sir."

Sir Herbert removed perspiration from his brow. Then he smiled, and there came into his eyes a light rarely seen in the eyes of a portly and middle-aged Knight of the British Empire who is inclined to be pompous and proud of his banking account, and who has done very nicely, thank you, out of the war.

"About you and Sylvia," he said, "I think I had better call on your mother and talk it over. I have her address, haven't I?"

Portrait of a Disciplinarian

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

Illustrated by
CHAS. CROMBIE

IT was with something of the relief of fog-bound city-dwellers who at last behold the sun that we perceived, on entering the bar-parlour of the Angler's Rest, that Mr. Mulliner was seated once more in the familiar chair. For some days he had been away, paying a visit to an old nurse of his down in Devonshire; and there was no doubt that in his absence the tide of intellectual conversation had run very low.

"No," said Mr. Mulliner, in answer to a question as to whether he had enjoyed himself, "I cannot pretend that it was an altogether agreeable experience. I was conscious throughout of a sense of a strain. The poor old thing is almost completely deaf, and her memory is not what it was. Moreover, it is a moot point whether a man of sensibility can ever be entirely at his ease in the presence of a woman who has frequently spanked him with the flat side of a hair-brush."

Mr. Mulliner winced slightly, as if the old wound still troubled him.

"It is curious," he went on, after a thoughtful pause, "how little change the years bring about in the attitude of a real, genuine, crusted old family nurse towards one who in the early knickerbocker stage of his career has been a charge of hers. He may grow grey or bald and be looked up to by the rest of his world as a warm performer on the Stock Exchange or a devil of a fellow in the sphere of Politics or the Arts, but to his old Nanna he will still be the Master James or Master Percival who had to be hounded by threats to keep his face clean. Shakespeare would have cringed before his old nurse. So would Herbert Spencer, Attila the Hun, and the Emperor Nero. My nephew Frederick—but I must not bore you with my family gossip."

We reassured him.

"Oh, well, if you wish to hear the story. There is nothing much in it as a story, but it bears out the truth of what I have just been saying."

I WILL begin (said Mr. Mulliner) at the moment when Frederick, having come down from London in response to an urgent summons from his brother, Dr. George Mulliner, stood in the latter's consulting-room, looking out upon the Esplanade of that quiet little watering-place, Bingley-on-Sea.

George's consulting-room, facing west, had the advantage of getting the afternoon sun; and this afternoon it needed all the sun it could get to counteract Frederick's extraordinary gloom. The young man's expression, as he confronted his brother, was that which a miasmic pool in some dismal swamp in the Bad Lands might have worn if it had had a face.

"Then the position, as I see it," he said in a low, toneless voice, "is this. On the pretext of wishing to discuss urgent family business with me, you have dragged me down to this foul spot—seventy miles by rail in a compartment containing three distinct infants sucking sweets—merely to have tea with a nurse whom I have disliked since I was a child."

"You have contributed to her support for many years," George reminded him.

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" Naturally, when the family were clubbing together to pension off the old blister, I chipped in with my little bit," said Frederick. " Noblesse oblige."

" Well, noblesse obliges you to go and have tea with her when she invites you. Wilks must be humoured. She is not so young as she was."

" She must be a hundred."

" Eighty-five."

" Good heavens! And it seems only yesterday that she shut me up in a cupboard for stealing jam."

" She was a great disciplinarian," agreed George. " You may find her a little on the autocratic side still. And I want to impress upon you, as her medical man, that you must not thwart her lightest whim. She will probably offer you boiled eggs and home-made cake. Eat them."

" I will not eat boiled eggs at five o'clock in the afternoon," said Frederick, with a strong man's menacing calm, " for any woman on earth."

" You will. And with relish. Her heart is weak. If you don't humour her, I won't answer for the consequences."

" If I eat boiled eggs at five in the afternoon, I won't answer for the consequences. And why boiled eggs, dash it? I'm not a schoolboy."

" To her you are. She looks on all of us as children still. Last Christmas she gave me a copy of ' Eric, or Little by Little.' "

FREDERICK turned to the window, and scowled down upon the noxious and depressing scene below. Sparing neither age nor sex in his detestation, he regarded the old ladies reading their library novels on the seats with precisely the same dislike and contempt which he bestowed on the boys' school clattering past on its way to the bathing-houses.

" Then, checking up your statements," he said, " I find that I am expected to go to tea with a woman who, in addition, apparently, to being a blend of Lucretia Borgia and a Prussian sergeant-major, is a physical wreck and practically potty. Why? That is what I ask. Why? As a child I objected strongly to Nurse Wilks; and now, grown to riper years, the thought of meeting her again gives me the heeby-jeebies. Why should I be victimized? Why me particularly? "

" It isn't you particularly. We've all been to see her at intervals, and so have the Oliphants."

" The Oliphants! "

The name seemed to affect Frederick oddly. He winced, as if his brother had been a dentist instead of a general practitioner and had just drawn one of his back teeth.

" She was their nurse after she left us. You can't have forgotten the Oliphants. I remember you at the age of twelve climbing that old elm at the bottom of the paddock to get Jane Oliphant a rook's egg."

Frederick laughed bitterly.

" I must have been a perfect ass. Fancy risking my life for a girl like that! Not," he went on, " that life's worth much. An absolute wash-out, that's what life is. However, it will soon be over. And then the silence and peace of the grave. That," said Frederick, " is the thought that sustains me."

" A pretty kid, Jane. Someone told me she had grown up quite a beauty."

" Without a heart."

" What do you know about it? "

" Merely this. She pretended to love me, and then a few months ago she went off to the country to stay with some people named Ponderby and wrote me a letter breaking off the engagement. She gave no reasons, and I have not seen her since. She is now engaged to a man named Dillingwater, and I hope it chokes her."

" I never heard about this. I'm sorry."

" I'm not. Merciful release is the way I look at it."

" Would he be one of the Sussex Dillingwaters? "

" I don't know what county the family infests. If I did, I would avoid it."

" Well, I'm sorry. No wonder you're depressed."

" Depressed? " said Frederick, outraged. " Me? You don't suppose I'm worrying myself about a girl like that, do you? I've never been so happy in my life. I'm just bubbling over with cheerfulness."

" Oh, is that what it is? " George looked at his watch. " Well, you'd better be pushing along. It'll take you about ten minutes to get to Marazion Road."

" How do I find the confounded house? "

" The name's on the door."

" What is the name? "

" Wee Holme."

" My God! " said Frederick Mulliner. " It only needed that! "

The view which he had had of it from his brother's window should, no doubt, have prepared Frederick for the hideous loathsomeness of Bingley-on-Sea; but, as he walked along, he found it coming on him as a complete surprise. Until now he had never imagined that a small town could possess so many soul-searing features. He passed little boys, and thought how repulsive little boys were. He met tradesmen's carts, and his gorge rose at the sight of them.

He hated the houses. And, most of all, he objected to the sun. It shone down with a cheeriness which was not only offensive, but, it seemed to Frederick Mulliner, deliberately offensive. What he wanted was wailing winds and driving rain; not a beastly expanse of vivid blue. It was not that the perfidy of Jane Oliphant had affected him in any way; it was simply that he disliked blue skies and sunshine. He had a temperamental antipathy for them, just as he had a temperamental fondness for tombs and sleet and hurricanes and earthquakes and famines and pestilences and——

He found that he had arrived in Marazion Road.

MARAZION ROAD was made up of two spotless pavements stretching into the middle distance and flanked by two rows of neat little red-brick villas. It smote Frederick like a blow. He felt as he looked at those houses, with their little brass knockers and little white curtains, that they were occupied by people who knew nothing of Frederick Mulliner and were content to know nothing; people who were simply not caring a whoop that only a few short months before the girl to whom he had been engaged had sent back his letters and gone and madly got herself betrothed to a man named Dillingwater.

He found Wee Holme, and hit it a nasty slap with its knocker. Footsteps sounded in the passage, and the door opened.

"Why, Master Frederick!" said Nurse Wilks. "I should hardly have known you."

Frederick, in spite of the natural gloom caused by the blue sky and the warm sunshine, found his mood lightening somewhat. Something that might almost have been a spasm of tenderness passed through him. He was not a bad-hearted young man—he ranked in that respect, he supposed, somewhere midway between his brother George, who had a heart of gold, and people like the future Mrs. Dillingwater, who had no heart at all—and there was a fragility about Nurse Wilks that first astonished and then touched him.

The images which we form in childhood are slow to fade; and Frederick had been under the impression that Nurse Wilks was fully six feet tall, with the shoulders of a weight-lifter and eyes that glittered cruelly beneath beetling brows. What he saw now was a little old woman with a wrinkled face, who looked as if a puff of wind would blow her away.

He was oddly stirred. He felt large and protective. He saw his brother's point now. Most certainly this frail old thing must be humoured. Only a brute would refuse to humour her—yes, felt Frederick Mulliner, even if it meant boiled eggs at five o'clock in the afternoon.

"Well, you are getting a big boy!" said Nurse Wilks, beaming.

"Do you think so?" said Frederick, with equal amiability.

"Quite the little man! And all dressed up. Go into the parlour, dear, and sit down. I'm getting the tea."

"Thanks."

"WIPE YOUR BOOTS!"

The voice, thundering from a quarter whence hitherto only soft cooings had proceeded, affected Frederick Mulliner a little like the touching off of a mine beneath his feet. Spinning round, he perceived a different person altogether from the mild and kindly hostess of a moment back. It was plain that there yet lingered in Nurse Wilks not a little of the ancient fire. Her mouth was tightly compressed and her eyes gleamed dangerously.

"Theideaofyourbringingyournastydirty-bootsintomynicecleanhousewithoutwiping-them!" said Nurse Wilks.

"Sorry!" said Frederick, humbly.

He burnished the criticized shoes on the mat, and tottered to the parlour. He felt much smaller, much younger, and much feebler than he had felt a minute ago. His *morale* had been shattered into fragments.

And it was not pieced together by the sight, as he entered the parlour, of Miss Jane Oliphant sitting in an arm-chair by the window.

It is hardly to be supposed that the public will be interested in the appearance of a girl of the stamp of Jane Oliphant—a girl capable of wantonly returning a good man's letters and going off and getting engaged to a Dillingwater; but one may as well describe her and get it over. She had golden-brown hair; golden-brown eyes; golden-brown eyebrows; a nice nose with one freckle on the tip; a mouth which, when it parted in a smile, disclosed pretty teeth; and a resolute little chin.

At the present moment the mouth was not parted in a smile. It was closed up tight, and the chin was more than resolute. It looked like the ram of a very small battleship. She gazed at Frederick as if he were the smell of onions, and she did not say a word.

Nor did Frederick say very much. Nothing is more difficult for a young man than to find exactly the right remark with which to open conversation with a girl who has recently returned his letters. (Darned good letters, too. Reading them over after opening the package, he had been amazed at their charm and eloquence.)

"WIPE YOUR BOOTS!"

The voice affected Frederick Mulliner a little like the touching off of a mine beneath his feet.

Frederick, then, confined his observations to the single word, "Guk!" Having uttered this, he sank into a chair and stared at the carpet. The girl stared out of window; and complete silence reigned in the room till from the interior of a clock which was ticking on the mantelpiece a small wooden bird suddenly emerged, said "Cuckoo," and withdrew.

The abruptness of this bird's appearance and the oddly staccato nature of its diction could not but have their effect on a man whose nerves were not what they had been. Frederick Mulliner, rising some eighteen inches from his chair, uttered a hasty exclamation.

"I beg your pardon?" said Jane Oliphant, raising her eyebrows.

"Well, how was I to know it was going to do that?" said Frederick, defensively.

Jane Oliphant shrugged her shoulders. The gesture seemed to imply supreme indifference to what the sweepings of the Underworld knew or did not know.

But Frederick, the ice being now in a manner broken, refused to return to the silence.

"What are you doing here?" he said.

"I have come to have tea with Nanna."

"I didn't know you were going to be here."

"Oh?"

"If I'd known that you were going to be here——"

"You've got a large smut on your nose."

Frederick gritted his teeth and reached for his handkerchief.

"Perhaps I'd better go," he said.

"You will do nothing of the kind," said Miss Oliphant, sharply. "She is looking forward to seeing you. Though why——"

"Why?" prompted Frederick, coldly.

"Oh, nothing."

IN the unpleasant silence which followed, broken only by the deep breathing of a man who was trying to choose the rudest out of the three retorts which had presented themselves to him, Nurse Wilks entered.

"It's just a suggestion," said Miss Oliphant, aloofly, "but don't you think you might help Nanna with that heavy tray?"

Frederick, roused from his preoccupation, sprang to his feet, blushing the blush of shame.

"You might have strained yourself, Nanna," the girl went on, in a voice dripping with indignant sympathy.

"I was going to help her," mumbled Frederick.

"Yes, after she had put the tray down on the table. Poor Nanna! How very heavy it must have been!"

Not for the first time since their acquaintance had begun, Frederick felt a sort of wistful wonder at his late *fiancée's* uncanny ability to put him in the wrong. His emotions now were rather what they would have been if he had been detected striking his hostess with some blunt instrument.

"He always was a thoughtless boy," said Nurse Wilks, tolerantly. "Do sit down, Master Frederick, and have your tea. I've boiled some eggs for you. I know what a boy you always are for eggs."

Frederick, starting, directed a swift glance at the tray. Yes, his worst fears had been realized. Eggs—and large ones. A stomach which he had fallen rather into the habit of pampering of late years gave a little whimper of apprehension.

"Yes," proceeded Nurse Wilks, pursuing the subject, "you never could have enough eggs. Nor cake. Dear me, how sick you made yourself with cake that day at Miss Jane's birthday party."

"Please!" said Miss Oliphant, with a slight shiver.

She looked coldly at her fermenting fellow-guest, as he sat plumbing the deepest abysses of self-loathing.

"No eggs for me, thank you," he said.

"Master Frederick, you will eat your nice boiled eggs," said Nurse Wilks. Her voice was still amiable, but there was a hint of dynamite behind it.

"I don't want any eggs."

"Master Frederick!" The dynamite exploded. Once again that amazing transformation had taken place, and a frail little old woman had become an intimidating force with which only a Napoleon could have reckoned. "I will not have this sulking."

Frederick gulped.

"I'm sorry," he said, meekly. "I should enjoy an egg."

"Two eggs," corrected Nurse Wilks.

"Two eggs," said Frederick.

Miss Oliphant twisted the knife in the wound.

"There seems to be plenty of cake, too. How nice for you! Still, I should be careful, if I were you. It looks rather rich. I never could understand," she went on, addressing Nurse Wilks in a voice which Frederick, who was now about seven years old, considered insufferably grown-up and affected, "the pleasure of overeating oneself."

"Boys will be boys," argued Nurse Wilks.

"I suppose so," sighed Miss Oliphant. "Still, it's all rather unpleasant."

A slight but well-defined glitter appeared in Nurse Wilks's eyes. She detected a tendency to hoity-toityness in her young guest's manner, and hoity-toityness was a thing to be checked.

"Girls," she said, "are by no means perfect."

"Ah!" breathed Frederick, in rapturous adhesion to the sentiment.

"Girls have their little faults. Girls are sometimes inclined to be vain. I know a little girl not a hundred miles from this room who was so proud of her new panties that she ran out in the street in them."

"Nanna!" cried Miss Oliphant, pinkly.

"Disgusting!" said Frederick.

He uttered a short laugh; and so full was this laugh, though short, of scorn, disdain, and a certain hideous masculine superiority, that Jane Oliphant's proud spirit writhed beneath the infliction. She turned on him with blazing eyes.

"What did you say?"

"I said, 'Disgusting!'"

"Indeed?"

"I cannot," said Frederick, judicially, "imagine a more deplorable exhibition, and I hope you were sent to bed without any supper."

"If you ever had to go without your supper," said Miss Oliphant, who believed in attack as the best form of defence, "it would kill you."

"Is that so?" said Frederick.

"You're a beast, and I hate you," said Miss Oliphant.

"Is that so?"

"Yes, that is so."

"Now, now, now!" said Nurse Wilks. "Come, come, come!"

She eyed the two with that comfortable look of power and capability which comes naturally to women who have spent half a century in dealing with the young and fractious.

"We will have no quarrelling," she said. "Make it up at once. Master Frederick, give Miss Jane a nice kiss."

The room rocked before Frederick's bulging eyes.

"A what?" he gasped.

"Give her a nice big kiss and tell her you're sorry you quarrelled with her."

"She quarrelled with me."

"Never mind. A little gentleman must always take the blame."

Frederick, working desperately, dragged to the surface a sketchy smile.

"I apologize," he said.

"Don't mention it," said Miss Oliphant.

"Kiss her," said Nurse Wilks.

"I won't!" said Frederick.

"What!"

"I won't."

"Master Frederick," said Nurse Wilks, rising and pointing a menacing finger, "you march straight into that cupboard in the passage and stay there till you are good."

Frederick hesitated. He came of a proud family. A Mulliner had once received the thanks of his Sovereign for services rendered on the field of Crécy. But the recollection of what his brother George had said decided him. *Infra dig.* as it might be to allow himself to be shoved away in cupboards, it was better than being responsible for a woman's heart-failure. With bowed head he passed through the door, and a key clicked behind him.

ALL alone in a dark world that smelt of mice, Frederick Mulliner gave himself up to gloomy reflection. He had just put in about two minutes' intense thought of a kind which would have made the meditations of Schopenhauer on one of his bad mornings seem like the day-dreams of Pollyanna, when a voice spoke through the crack in the door.

"Freddie! I mean, Mr. Mulliner."

"Well?"

"She's gone into the kitchen to get the jam," proceeded the voice rapidly. "Shall I let you out?"

"Pray do not trouble," said Frederick, coldly. "I am perfectly comfortable."

Silence followed. Frederick returned to his reverie. About now, he thought, but for his brother George's treachery in luring him down to this plague-spot by a misleading telegram, he would have been on the twelfth green at Squashy Hollow, trying out that new putter. Instead of which——

The door opened abruptly, and as abruptly closed again. And Frederick Mulliner, who had been looking forward to an unbroken solitude, discovered with a good deal of astonishment that he had started taking in lodgers.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded, with a touch of proprietorial disapproval.

The girl did not answer. But presently muffled sounds came to him through the darkness. In spite of himself, a certain tenderness crept upon Frederick.

"I say," he said, awkwardly. "There's nothing to cry about."

"I'm not crying. I'm laughing."

"Oh?" The tenderness waned. "You think it's amusing, do you, being shut up in this damned cupboard?"

"There is no need to use bad language."

"I entirely disagree with you. There is every need to use bad language. It's ghastly enough being at Bingley-on-Sea at all, but when it comes to being shut up in Bingley cupboards——"

"With a girl you hate?"

"We will not go into that aspect of the matter," said Frederick, with dignity. "The important point is that here I am in a cupboard at Bingley-on-Sea when, if there were any justice or right-thinking in the world, I should be out at Squashy Hollow——"

"Master Frederick," said Nurse Wilks, "you march straight into that cupboard in the passage and stay there till you are good."

"Oh? Do you still play golf?"

"Certainly I still play golf. Why not?"

"I don't know why not. I'm glad you are still able to amuse yourself."

"How do you mean, still? Do you think that just because——?"

"I don't think anything."

"I suppose you imagined I should be creeping about the place, a broken-hearted wreck?"

"Oh, no. I knew you would find it very easy to console yourself."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Never mind."

"Are you insinuating that I am the sort of man who turns lightly from one woman to another—a mere butterfly who flits from flower to flower, sipping——?"

"Yes, if you want to know, I think you are a born sipper."

Frederick started. The charge was monstrous.

"I have never sipped. And, what's more, I have never flitted."

"That's funny."

"What's funny?"

"What you said."

"You appear to have a very keen sense of humour," said Frederick, weightily. "It amuses you to be shut up in cupboards. It amuses you to hear me say——"

"Well, it's nice to be able to get some amusement out of life, isn't it? Do you

want to know why she shut me up in here ? "

" I haven't the slightest curiosity. Why ?"

" I forgot where I was and lighted a cigarette. Oh, my goodness ! "

" Now what ? "

" I thought I heard a mouse. Do you think there are mice in this cupboard ? "

" Certainly," said Frederick. " Dozens of them."

He would have gone on to specify the kind of mice—large, fat, slithery, active mice ; but at this juncture something hard and sharp took him agonizingly on the ankle.

" Ouch ! " cried Frederick.

" Oh, I'm sorry. Was that you ? "

" It was."

" I was kicking about to discourage the mice."

" I see."

" Did it hurt much ? "

" Only a trifle more than blazes, thank you for inquiring."

" I'm sorry."

" So am I."

" Anyway, it would have given a mouse a nasty jar, if it had been one, wouldn't it ? "

" The shock, I should imagine, of a lifetime."

" Well, I'm sorry."

" Don't mention it. Why should I worry about a broken ankle when——"

" When what ? "

" I forget what I was going to say."

" When your heart is broken ? "

" My heart is not broken." It was a point which Frederick wished to make luminously clear. " I am gay — happy. Who the devil is this man Dillingwater ? " he concluded, abruptly.

There was a momentary pause.

" Oh, just a man."

" Where did you meet him ? "

" At the Ponderbys'."

" Where did you get engaged to him ? "

" At the Ponderbys'."

" Did you pay another visit to the Ponderbys, then ? "

" No."

Frederick choked.

" When you went to stay with the Ponderbys, you were engaged to me. Do you mean to say you broke off your engagement to me, met this Dillingwater, and got engaged to him all in the course of a single visit lasting barely two weeks ? "

" Yes."

Frederick said nothing. It struck him later that he should have said, " Oh, woman, woman ! " but at the moment it did not occur to him.

" I don't see what right you have to criticize me," said Jane.

" Who criticized you ? "

" You did."

" When ? "

"Just then."

"I call Heaven to witness," cried Frederick Mulliner, "that not by so much as a single word have I hinted at my opinion that your conduct is the vilest and most revolting that has ever been drawn to my attention. I never so much as suggested that your revelation had shocked me to the depths of my soul."

"Yes, you did. You sniffed."

"If Bingley-on-Sea is not open for being sniffed in at this season," said Frederick, coldly, "I should have been informed earlier."

"I had a perfect right to get engaged to anyone I liked, and as quick as I liked, after the abominable way you behaved."

"Abominable way I behaved? What do you mean?"

"You know."

"Pardon me, I do not know. If you are alluding to my refusal to wear the tie you bought for me on my last birthday, I can but repeat my statement, made to you at the time, that, apart from being the sort of tie no upright man would be seen dead in a ditch with, its colours were those of a cycling, angling, and dart-throwing club of which I am not a member."

"I am not alluding to that. I mean the day I was going to the Ponderbys' and you promised to see me off at Paddington, and then you 'phoned and said you couldn't as you were detained by important business, and I thought, 'Well, I think I'll go by the later train after all, because that will give me time to lunch quietly at the Berkeley,' and I went and lunched quietly at the Berkeley, and when I was there who should I see but you at a table at the other end of the room, gorging yourself in the company of a beastly creature in a pink frock and henna'd hair. That's what I mean."

Frederick clutched at his forehead.

"Repeat that," he exclaimed.

Jane did so.

"Ye gods!" said Frederick.

"It was like a blow over the head. Something seemed to snap inside me, and——"

"I can explain all," said Frederick.

Jane's voice in the darkness was cold.

"Explain?" she said.

"Explain," said Frederick.

"All?"

"All."

Jane coughed.

"Before beginning," she said, "do not forget that I know every one of your female relatives by sight."

"I don't want to talk about my female relatives."

"I thought you were going to say that she was one of them—an aunt or something."

"Nothing of the kind. She was a revue star. You probably saw her in a piece called 'Toot-Toot.'"

"And that is your idea of an explanation!"

FREDERICK raised his hand for silence. Realizing that she could not see it, he lowered it again.

"Jane," he said in a low, throbbing voice, "can you cast your mind back to a morning in the spring when we walked, you and I, in Kensington Gardens? The sun shone brightly, the sky was a limpid blue flecked with fleecy clouds, and from the west there blew a gentle breeze——"

"If you think you can melt me with that sort of——"

"Nothing of the kind. What I was leading up to was this. As we walked, you and I, there came snuffling up to us a small Pekingese dog. It left me, I admit, quite cold, but you went into ecstasies; and from that moment I had but one mission in life, to discover who that Peke belonged to and buy it for you. And after the most exhaustive inquiries I tracked the animal down. It was the property of the lady in whose company you saw me lunching—lightly, not gorging—at the Berkeley that day. I managed to get an introduction to her, and immediately began to make offers to her for the dog. Money was no object to me. All I wished was to put the little beast in your arms and see your face light up. It was to be a surprise. That morning the woman 'phoned, and said that she had practically decided to close with my latest bid, and would I take her to lunch and discuss the matter? It was agony to have to ring you up and tell you that I could not see you off at Paddington, but it had to be done. It was anguish having to sit for two hours listening to that highly-coloured female telling me how the comedian had ruined her big number in her last show by standing up-stage and pretending to drink ink, but that had to be done, too. I bit the bullet and saw it through, and I got the dog that afternoon. And next morning I received your letter breaking off the engagement."

There was a long silence.

"Is this true?" said Jane.

"Quite true."

"It sounds too—how shall I put it?—too frightfully probable. Look me in the face!"

"What's the good of looking you in the face when I can't see an inch in front of me?"

"Well, is it true?"

"Certainly it is true."

"Can you produce the Peke?"

"I have not got it on my person," said Frederick, stiffly. "But it is at my flat, probably chewing up a valuable rug. I will give it you for a wedding present."

"Oh, Freddie!"

"A wedding present," repeated Frederick, though the words stuck in his throat like patent American health-cereal.

"But I'm not going to be married."

"You're—what did you say?"

"I'm not going to be married."

"But what of Dillingwater?"

"That's off."

"Off?"

"Off," said Jane, firmly. "I only got engaged to him out of pique. I thought I could go through with it, buoying myself up by thinking what a score it would be off you, but one morning I saw him eating a peach and I began to waver. He splashed himself to the eyebrows. And just after that I found that he had a trick of making a sort of funny noise when he drank coffee. I would sit on the other side of the breakfast table, looking at him and saying to myself, 'Now comes the funny noise!' and when I thought of doing that all the rest of my life I saw that the scheme was impossible. So I broke off the engagement."

Frederick gasped.

"Master Frederick!"
"Hullo?"
"Are you good now?"

"Jane!"

He groped out, found her, and drew her into his arms.

"Freddie!"

"Jane!"

"Freddie!"

"Jane!"

"Freddie!"

"Jane!"

On the panel of the door there sounded an authoritative rap. Through it there spoke an authoritative voice, slightly cracked by age, but full, nevertheless, of the spirit that will stand no nonsense.

"Master Frederick!"

"Hullo?"

"Are you good now?"

"You bet I'm good."

"Will you give Miss Jane a nice kiss?"

"I will do," said Frederick Mulliner, enthusiasm ringing in every syllable, "just that little thing!"

"Then you may come out," said Nurse Wilks. "I have boiled you two more eggs."

Frederick paled, but there was the right stuff in him. What did anything matter now?

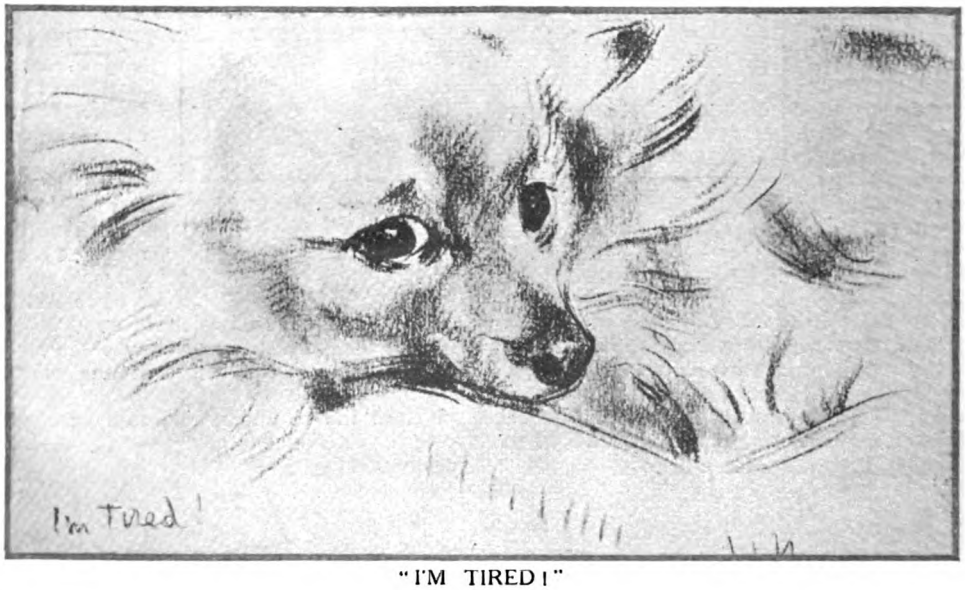
"Lead me to them," he said in a low voice.

STUDIES OF A POM

By

SIR WILLIAM ORPEN, R.A.

THE majority of animals I am very fond of, and usually get on good terms with them quickly, especially with dogs. By "dogs" I mean real dogs—"man's friend." But the subject I am writing about in this article is not one of that class—far from it. He's a "Pom" from Pommery; and of all the dogs I have ever met, this breed, the "Pom,"



"I'M TIRED!"

I have avoided as much as possible. They snap, bark, and are a general nuisance to strangers in the house, and possibly to the owners as well. I have always disliked them as a breed. Give him or her the most gentle tap, and the howls and shrieks will bring the whole house round you before you can say "Jack Robinson." And then you are plied with questions difficult to answer, such as: "What has happened to the little lamb?" "Who has hurt the little precious?" "Darling mine," and all that sort of thing. But the "Pom"

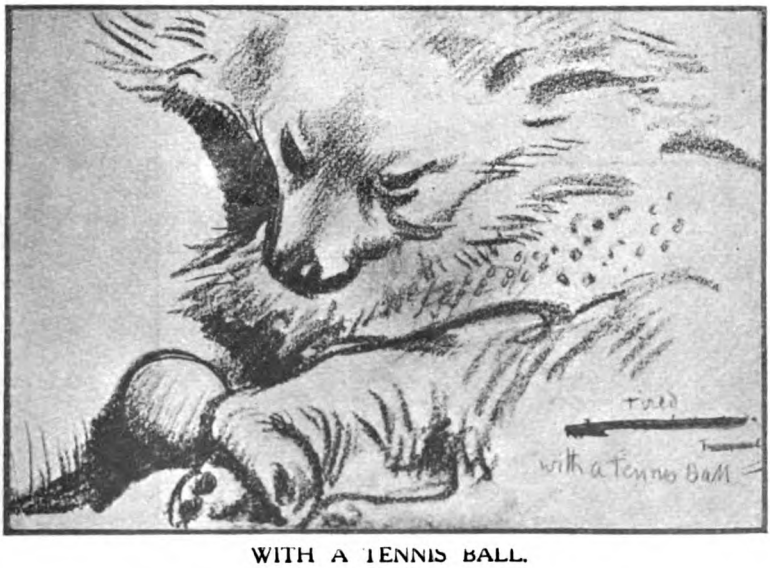
HALF ASLEEP.

VERY BORED AT POSING.

beings, if they really love them, than any other breed.

In a certain house in London, where I sometimes lunch or dine, there is a "Pom" whom I have studied and made friends

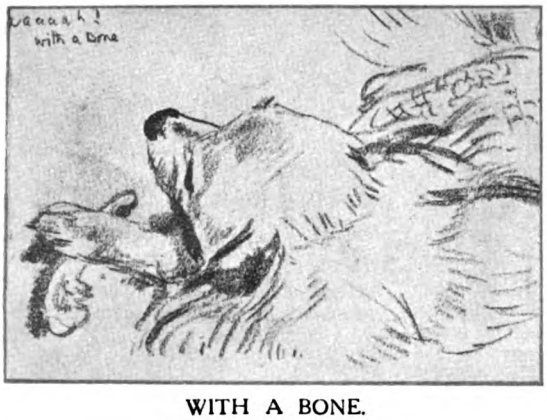
loves it all, and looks at you out of the corner of his eye as much as to say, "You poor Boob, you've done for yourself in this house properly." At the same time, with other animals these little "Poms" are as brave as lions; they will walk up to the largest dog, apparently without any fear. Also, they have brains far ahead of most dogs, and they certainly have more adoration for human



WITH A TENNIS BALL.

WORRIED WITH MUSIC.

NERVOUS.



WITH A BONE.

NOT QUITE SURE.

AFTER CASTOR OIL!

with, and "he sure has some brain." His master and mistress have allowed me to do these few drawings of him while I have been at luncheon or dinner with them, and he is in his basket, listening to everything — unless he is too sleepy — but the second I get a pencil and paper he knows exactly what is wanted of him and will stay quiet, and keep the same expression for the whole ten minutes or so that I am trying to draw him — far better indeed than any human being would trouble to do. When I have done, I say to him, "Good dog—finished." And he jumps out of his basket, and comes and puts his paws on my knees, and kisses the paper, and goes back to his basket, and settles down to a well-earned sleep.

SLEEP.

But of course he barks. It is terrible, but all these little "Poms" do so—they can't help it, it's their nature, and they've just got to speak to us human beings that way. We may hate it, but we mustn't blame them.

These little animals have certain senses vastly more developed than our own; in fact, we are almost completely ignorant of them in comparison. This particular animal, when his master comes home at any time during the day, can hear his footsteps even through all the roar of the traffic, from at least a hundred yards or more distant from the house. Then he starts barking in an awful manner, and there is no peace in the house until the master has spoken to and patted him. But more extraordinary still is his sense of smell. When his master and mistress go abroad, he is sent down to the country, to some relatives of hers, where, although he is very fond of them, he is never quite at ease. He is always listening for the well-known steps that will arrive to bring him back to his real home in London. Yet when there, they tell me that if any morning, when the early post arrives, the little animal kicks up a terrible row (even though he sleeps on the second floor), then they know there is a letter in the box from one of the relations in the country with whom he has been staying, and there is no peace in the house until this letter is brought up and read, and given to him to kiss, and smell, and take off to his basket, where he will lie and fondle and kiss it for hours, in silent bliss. You see, even a "Pom" has some good points about him.

WORRIED.

EXPERIENCES OF
A BOND STREET JEWELLER

MRS. PENGARVIS

By

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

Illustrated by
STANLEY LLOYD

I.

THE case of Mrs. Pengarvis is fresh in my memory because Mrs. Corwen was mixed up in it. The wife is one who has marched with the times. When we first met, her position, socially speaking, ranked higher than mine. She was a designer of important pieces of jewellery. Her designs captivated me before I made her acquaintance, which soon ripened into friendship and love. We began our married life in a small semi-detached villa out Hampstead way; and I used to toil up Haverstock Hill simply because in those early days I had to count my pennies. We now reside in a too pretentious "mansion" in Kensington, with a cat-walk behind it which Mrs. C. dignifies with the name of garden. I hope that I too have marched with the times in the conduct of my business, but out of business hours I have no stomach for fashionable society. Mrs. C. numbers among her friends two or three ladies of title who ignore any claims I may have to their attention. However—no complaints!

Mrs. Pengarvis was not her real name. She had been in her youth what used to be termed a "professional beauty," *persona gratissima* to some of the highest personages in the realm. One day, drinking tea in my wife's drawing-room, she exclaimed irrelevantly: "Put not your trust in princes." To what extent the lady trusted princes is beyond my personal knowledge, but Mrs. Corwen, at the time, was visibly impressed.

I knew Mrs. Pengarvis, as a customer, long before she was entertained at my house. Indeed, she always called for me when she came into our establishment, because, I fancy, she could wheedle me into shading our fixed prices for trinkets. She possessed at that time a valuable collection of jewellery which she was continually having reset. I recall changing the design of a tiara twice. She would coax me to take back rings which she was tired of wearing. She said graciously that I was the only man whom she trusted to restring her pearls, which were not family pearls and had not been given to her by Mr. Pengarvis. He was Mrs. Pengarvis's husband. Everybody who is anybody knew *where* they lived; *how* they lived was the gossip of the town. In my business a man who is not a fool must take his customers as he finds them. Mrs. Pengarvis's pearls and diamonds—she had many diamonds—were bought from us. It was no concern of mine who paid for them.

I could not help feeling grieved when I noted that she was losing her looks. With me she never dissembled, saying disconcertingly: "You are thinking what a hag I am." When I put it to her that I should not dare to think anything of the sort, her gay laugh would ring out. That laugh was famous. It covered, so Mrs. Grundy affirmed, a multitude of *peccadilloes*—I shrink from using a harsher word. It invariably beguiled me. I must add that her manner with me, and doubtless with everybody else, was artlessly familiar. From the tip of her toe to the top of her lovely little head she was a lady of quality, and connected, not by marriage, with half the peerage. It never entered my mind that she was capable

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of playing a dirty trick on me, but I ought, perhaps, to have remembered that her father, a much impoverished nobleman, was lamentably mixed up in the " Guinea Pig " scandal. She used to call me Corwen in the friendliest fashion : " Now, Corwen, did you hop out of bed this morning on the right side ? I shall be so unhappy if I don't get the better of you." And so on and so forth.

A witch !

She began life at the top of the Maypole ; I feared that she might slide to the bottom. She had achieved what is called to-day—publicity. Her photographs were sold all over the kingdom. Unhappily she had no children. Married women without children, so the wife tells me, suffer from " nerves," but I never detected in her any contemptible self-pity. She laughed at herself as she laughed at me and my staid, respectable ways. " Oh, Corwen, you *are* a scream ! "

She sold her diamonds when Time maltreated her, but refused to part from her pearls, which she wore night and day. Nobody knows better than myself what a passion gems may be to a woman. They become part of her personality.

Long before the war, Mr. Pengarvis died—missed in certain clubs but not regretted. A year afterwards his widow entertained as paying guest a rich young American girl—from the Mid-West, I believe —whom she launched into high society. She said to me : " One has to live, my Corwen." A succession of " paying guests " helped, no doubt, to keep the wolf from her door, but the beast was there, lurking about.

She lost money over a hat-shop, making no secret to me why so clever a woman failed : " Bad debts, Corwen. Could I dun my own pals ? *They* let me down."

Finally, she took under her wing a lady from the Brazils. I must camouflage her resounding name and speak of her as the Señora Miraflores. My favourite pudding is a Gâteau de Mille Feuilles, a very pretty bit of confectionery—layers of puff pastry, apricot jam, whipped cream, and the whole sprinkled with chopped burnt almonds. The Señora was like my *gâteau*. Mrs. Pengarvis said of her : " So sweet, Corwen —melts in the mouth." I couldn't have got the Señora into *my* mouth, for she was a creature of generous curves, but I knew what my little lady meant.

II.

THE SEÑORA " adored " pearls. I am not writing a monograph on pearls, but I have to say something professional about them. I mentioned that Mrs. Pengarvis entrusted her " rope " to me when it needed restringing. At that time we employed an old Italian woman, something of a character. She was very dirty and took snuff. She would come into my private room and sit at a table opposite to me. Then I would deliver the pearls, which she handled as if they were beads. She used no needle. She threaded the pearls, licking a double strand of special silk ; she worked quickly ; she placed a knot of her own contrivance between each big pearl. She taught me how to tie these knots, something of a knack, and when she went back to Italy I took over this agreeable and important task.

An unscrupulous stringer of valuable pearls could substitute pearls of the same size much less valuable, and it would be almost impossible to prove in a court of law that such substitution had been made. The same can be said of diamonds. There are Golconda stones, Brazilian stones, and Cape stones. We have reset some of the finest tiaras in the kingdom. We could have substituted Cape stones for Indian stones, pocketing the difference in value, and few persons, outside the trade, would detect the fraud. With pearls the risk of such substitution is even greater, and that is why I was flattered when Mrs. Pengarvis selected me to do such responsible work. Fine as her rope was, no expert could call it perfect, because the pearls were not quite matched and gradated. I do not hesitate to affirm that if a customer instructed me to go into the open market, make and deliver a *perfect* rope, regardless of cost, it might take me years of patient search to collect the pearls.

The Señora, presented to me by Mrs. Pengarvis, bought from us a string of pearls neither better nor worse than the little lady's string. She paid much more for it, because pearls had gone up in value. Perhaps a commission was paid on this sale ; perhaps it wasn't.

The Señora thanked me effusively for the pains I had taken.

At this moment the trouble began to incubate. I recall the scene in my private room. The Señora held both strings in her small plump hand and was comparing them. Mrs. Pengarvis turned to me :—

" Now, Corwen, these are heavenly twins. Can you tell Jack from Jill ? "

" Quite easily."

" And which is the better of the two darlings ? To which does Judge Corwen award the prize ? "

" I reserve judgment, Madam."

" He calls an old friend *Madam*. He never forgets what he is, and I never forget what I used to be. Give the pearls to him, Juanita, and let us force judgment out of the mouth of the Paris of London."

Her laugh tinkled as gaily as ever. I took the pearls, and was seized with an unhappy inspiration.

"I say this—no more. At Christie's the bidding for each string, if the trade was bidding, would be fairly equal. If I were bidding I should pay more than double the bid, if I could secure both strings."

"Paris has become the Sphinx. Why?"

"Because, if the pearls were unstrung, mixed up in one heap, and then carefully restrung, the two new strings would be better matched and gradated."

Mrs. Pengarvis considered this seriously. A creature of impulse, enslaved by any passing whim, she exclaimed:—

"What do you say to that, Juanita? It has always vexed me that my pearls were not too well matched."

The Señora replied lazily:—

"Aye! I want the best I can get for my money, no? If it pleases you, *alma de mi vida*, to mix up the pearls, I am content."

And so it came to pass that these accursed pearls were unstrung by me, mixed up, and restrung. I made, of course, a modest charge for my work, but I regarded it as a labour of love.

III.

MATCHING pearls takes time and patience, and during business hours I have a thousand calls on my attention. Accordingly, I broke an unwritten law of our establishment—which as a partner I had a right to do—and took the pearls to my own house. After dinner, Mrs. Corwen and I went to work on them. Her eyesight is better than mine, and she was quite excited because she knew Mrs. Pengarvis and the Señora and had entertained both ladies at luncheon. How this intimacy, if you can term it that, came about I cannot remember. The ladies met, I fancy, at a bazaar, or worked together upon a committee. It is certain that Mrs. Pengarvis introduced herself to my wife as an old friend of mine and said some handsome things about me which I can't repeat. I think Mrs. Corwen bought a hat or two from her. Anyway, a slight acquaintance ripened into a sort of intimacy. It is humiliating to add that Mrs. Pengarvis had "cheapened herself" by becoming too friendly with any person who could show her hospitality. In her prosperous days she had entertained lavishly; in her poverty she expected to be entertained—and she was. When Mrs. Corwen developed an interest (never shared by me) in smart people she engaged a good cook, and I saw to it that my cellar should not disgrace her *cuisine*.

The two strings of pearls were dispatched to Mrs. Pengarvis and I dismissed the matter from my mind.

Six weeks later, Mr. Rappington, the head of our firm, came into my room, closed the door, and dropped heavily into a chair. I guessed that something unpleasant had taken place. I was not mistaken.

"The Señora Miraflores is a customer of ours. You sold her a rope of pearls."

"Call it a string—yes."

"She says that her string and a similar string belonging to Mrs. Pengarvis were mixed up and two fresh strings made."

"Perfectly correct."

"Is this her string?"

I took the pearls and looked at them. I identified a small diamond clasp and the big pearl in the centre of the string.

"The Señora," said I, "has added some pearls to this string, substituting better for worse."

"Or *vice versa*. The new pearls are imitation."

I was speechless. Pearls are so marvellously imitated that it is quite possible to place the real beside the sham without fear of detection unless they are tested. I made no doubt that Rappington had tested them.

"Who restrung the two necklaces?"

"I did—with a little help from Mrs. Corwen."

"Here?"

"In my own house."

Rappington said stiffly:—

"We have a rule——"

"I know, but this was an exceptional case. I took a personal interest in these pearls; I attempted to match for the Señora the string belonging to Mrs. Pengarvis; I suggested mixing the two lots."

"Yes; so the Señora said."

"But—damn it all!—she hasn't the effrontery to accuse me of substituting sham pearls for real?"

Rappington shrugged his shoulders.

"If she had done that, I should have referred her to our solicitors."

"Thank you, Rappington."

"Not at all. She has consulted me. She would have consulted you, I dare say, if you had been here; you happened to be out when she came. She swears that the pearls have never been out of her possession since *you* sent them to her."

"But I didn't send them to her. I made one parcel of the two strings and sent it by our own messenger to Mrs. Pengarvis."

"M'm."

I admit that I grew warm in the collar. Rappington had sniffed. He had never liked Mrs. Pengarvis; and I fancy he was not too well pleased that she was on such friendly terms with me.

"Did the Señora suggest that her friend and hostess had played hanky-panky with her pearls?" I asked.

"I say this—no more. At Christie's the bidding for each string, if the trade was bidding, would be fairly equal. If I were bidding I should pay more than double the bid, if I could secure both strings."

"She made no suggestions. She came here, very properly, and showed me the necklace."

"How did she find out that some of the pearls were imitations?"

"I don't know."

We stared at each other. I was terribly upset, because suspicion lay heavily upon Mrs. Pengarvis. And I admit frankly that I can't cope with delicate affairs of this kind. Our good name might be imperilled.

"It's a dirty business," said Rappington. "Take the necklace and find out how many false pearls there are in it. Make an estimate what it would cost to replace them."

"But, good Lord! *you* are not thinking of replacing them?"

"Not yet. Some unknown party has robbed the Señora of just so much hard cash. Let us have the amount in L.S.D."

"We had better send for Impey. He retrieved our emeralds."

To cut the cackle, we sent for Charles Impey.

IV.

I HAD an unpleasant half-hour alone with Impey, who is almost brutally outspoken. Over the affair of the emeralds I had hailed him as Sherlock Holmes, but he had none of that great man's ironic suavity. I had difficulty in restraining my temper when he calmly asked me if I had left the pearls alone with my wife, which I had.

"The question might be asked in court," he replied, when I protested.

"In court?"

"I take it that the Señora will consider nobody's feelings but her own. She wants her pearls back, or their equivalent."

"She is a sweet creature."

"Look here, Mr. Corwen, you must understand that in a case of this kind suspicion attaches itself to every person who has had the pearls in temporary possession—you—your wife—Mrs. Pengarvis—and the Señora."

"And my messenger?"

"And your messenger. But he could tell us, probably, when he left Bond Street and how much time he took to get to Mrs. Pengarvis's house in Bolton Street—a few minutes. That clears *him*."

"Of course it does; I was only joking."

"Quite. I have the essential facts. I must sift them and make a few inquiries. Tell me what you know about the sham pearls."

"Only this; they are as good as they can be, equal in weight, colour, and lustre to the real pearls."

"How do you test them?"

"Quite easily—either with a strong magnifying glass or with the teeth. The surface of a real pearl looks smooth under a powerful lens; the surface of a sham pearl shows tiny air bubbles. On the other hand, if you pass a real pearl to and fro against the edge of your tooth, you will feel something sandy and gritty—quite unmistakable. The sham pearl, tested the same way, is smooth as glass."

"You don't apply acids?"

"No."

"Let me see this string."

He took it to the window and examined it carefully, rubbing the real centre pearl and then the pearls next it against his teeth. He nodded, but made no comment as he returned the string to me. Foolishly I asked a question:—

"You can make no guess?"

"I never guess, Mr. Corwen. *Good evening.*"

As if any evening could be good after such a distressing experience. I went home and refrained, for obvious reasons, from mentioning the matter to Mrs. Corwen.

Next day I saw Mrs. Pengarvis. She was terribly upset, but displayed no signs of temper. I gathered that a scene had taken place between her and the Señora.

"She told me last night that she had brought her pearls here. I heard for the first time that she had been robbed. I missed the necklace."

"One moment. Are you sure that she always wore it?"

"Absolutely. Night and day, as I wear mine. I could swear to that. Corwen—she suspects *me*. From her manner I knew that. One always knows. I have been suspected before——"

"Heavens! Of what?"

She smiled roguishly.

"Of stealing—hearts. I say what I think. I taxed her with suspecting me; she attempted no denial. She had the impudence to say with a sweet fat smile: 'You had both necklaces, *no*, in your keeping for twenty-four hours, *hé*, *hé*, and, *Santisima!* it was so easy for you!'"

She mimicked her to the life; I could hear the Señora speaking, half-lispingly.

"Did you have them for twenty-four hours?"

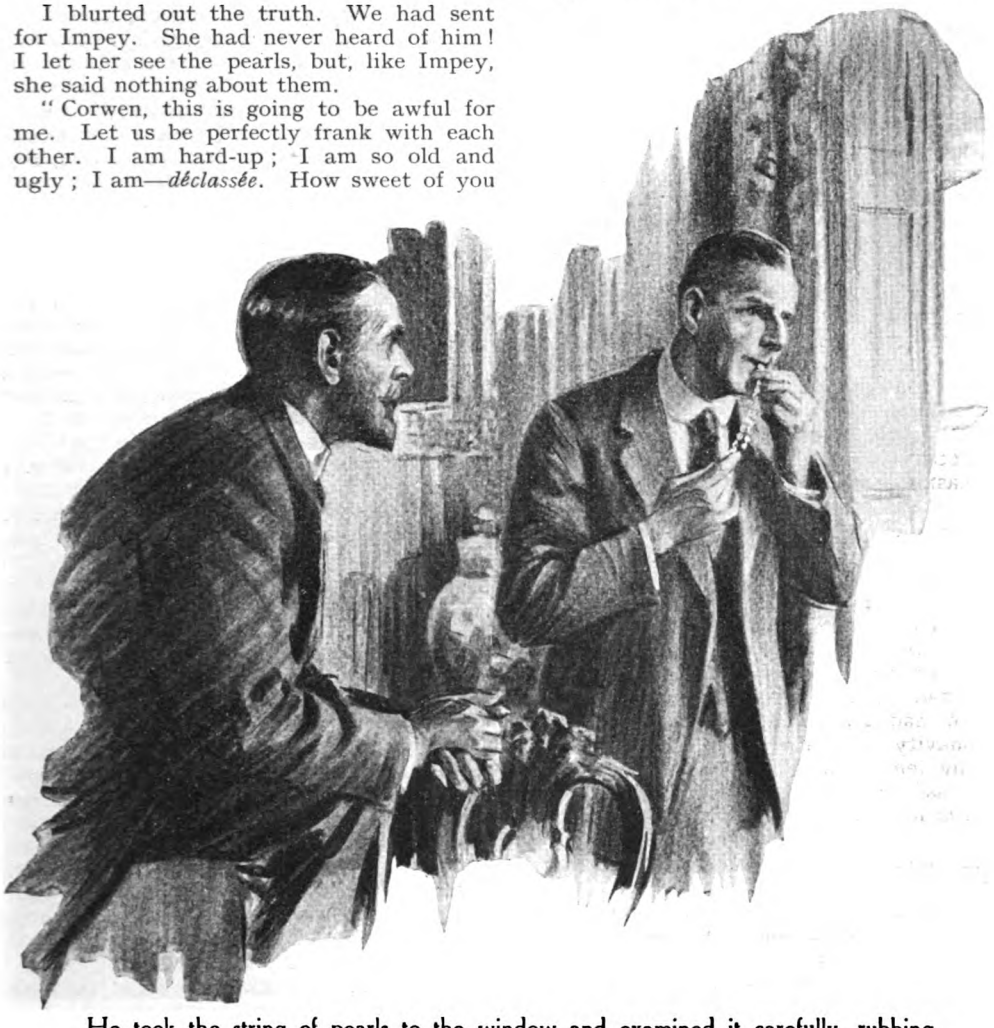
"Of course I did. They were delivered to me. She was at Brighton. Oh, Corwen, Corwen, why didn't you send her string, sealed and registered, to her?"

Why, indeed? Tragedy hangs upon these "why's."

"She left my house this morning; she has gone to an hotel. I popped in here. What have you done? Tell me. Where are these pearls? I—I want to see them, to compare them again with my own."

I blurted out the truth. We had sent for Impey. She had never heard of him! I let her see the pearls, but, like Impey, she said nothing about them.

"Corwen, this is going to be awful for me. Let us be perfectly frank with each other. I am hard-up; I am so old and ugly; I am—*déclassée*. How sweet of you



He took the string of pearls to the window and examined it carefully, rubbing the real centre pearl and then the pearls next it against his teeth.

to shake your head, but—there it is. I have enemies. My husband's family hate me. All the old cats will get their claws into me. What shall I do?"

"We—we must trust in Charles Impey. He pulled me out of a bottomless pit; he will do the same for you."

"If I could believe that——"

"You must."

"What a comfort you are! But, my dear man, I have a—past. And no future. The past will be raked up. Think of me with an ogre asking horrible questions. Think of my enemies in court licking their lips. I couldn't face that. I'd sooner die."

"Come, come, the Señora may accuse me, or my wife."

"You? With your face and whiskers? You have your reputation behind you, and mine, *mine* hangs over me like the sword of what-d'ye-call-him. What do you mean by saying they might accuse that nice wife of yours?"

"The pearls were restrung at my house, after I had matched them. In a court of law I should have to admit that my wife was alone with them for perhaps half an hour. Impey prepared me. We are—suspect. Did the Señora dare to threaten you with—with a—a criminal charge?"

"You blessed innocent! Of course she did. Corwen, if I got you into any trouble, you and your wife, I should feel suicidal."

"Mrs. Pengarvis! Believe me—we shall find a way out of this."

" You can speak confidently for yourself, but I see no way for me. *And she knows that.* I am tempted to—to own up."

" Own up ? " I gasped.

" Do you think that I could wear those false pearls next my skin ? I wonder. But some of the real ones *are* mine. *They* would feel at home. Corwen, she made me an offer. If I give her my string and take hers she will hold her tongue. But—it is like tearing my soul out of my body. Still, if you tell me to own up, I will do so."

For a miserable instant I believed that she had taken the real pearls. What she said was so misleading. And then her delightful laugh put all suspicions to ignoble flight.

" You can't," said I, " own up to a lie."

" Bless you, Corwen ! When one has told so many, does an extra one matter ? I secure the only thing a woman values when she is old—peace of mind."

I stared at her helplessly.

V.

SHE flitted out of my room with a jest on her lips. Never have I met her like ! Call it quality. I can think of no other word. From me she must have rushed straight to a more powerful friend, so great a personage that I will call him A. I passed a wretched morning, hoping to hear from Impey. I felt that he would do " something," but I dared not hazard the vaguest conjecture what he *could* do. At two, A. sent for me. I had never met him ; he was not a customer of ours. I hurried to his stately house, and was shown into a small room which held the most beautiful Fragonard I had ever seen, and some museum bits of Sèvres porcelain. A. received me civilly enough, but if I think of Mrs. Pengarvis as Beauty he is stamped on my mind as Beast, an ugly, cynical, hateful old man, not insolent, but arrogant. He beat no bushes.

" I have seen Mrs. Pengarvis. The less said about her the better. She is my kinswoman. Replace the pearls, Mr. Corwen, send the bill to me, return the necklace to Señora Miraflores, damn her, and get a written undertaking that the incident is closed. I don't think there is anything more to say."

There was so much to say that I couldn't utter a word. To gain peace of mind my poor little lady had lied to this enormously rich kinsman. I bowed, not in my best manner, and left him. Of course I had to tell Rappington, and we nearly quarrelled. He said in his head-of-the-firm voice :—

" We are well out of this, Corwen. Mrs. Pengarvis stole the pearls. I knew that from the first. His Grace knows it too."

" His Grace is mistaken—and so are you."

" My good man——! Let's scrap sentiment. Think what you please, but get to work at once on the Señora string. Nobody can do that better than yourself, and no underling must know."

He dismissed me with a gesture. I went back to my room, sent for what loose pearls we had, pulled out the accursed string, and very nearly burst into tears.

Hardly had I got to work when Impey rang me up.

" *Don't touch necklace till you see me.*"

He added that he would drop in at the first possible moment, but I twiddled my thumbs till nearly closing time. Why did Impey ask me to leave the necklace untouched ? He knew nothing about pearls, real or false. What on earth could he find out from it that had escaped me ?

He came at five.

" How did you know," I asked, " that I was thinking of touching the necklace ? "

" I didn't know. I wanted to examine it again."

I handed it to him.

" Are any of these your knots, Mr. Corwen ? "

" Two. The big pearl in the centre has not been disturbed. The pearls on each side of it are imitations."

" Your knot is a figure of eight."

" Yes."

" As a favour to me, don't ask me questions, but answer mine. Can you tell me anything about the people who make sham pearls ? "

I could and I did. In those days the Japanese pearls were not on the market. One firm specializing in false pearls had manufactured an article which was pre-eminently the finest imitation of the real thing in the world. They were not cheap ; they were so solid that you could strike a specimen a sharp blow with a mallet and not injure it. Gradated strings of these were sold for about ten pounds apiece. Impey listened attentively, nodding his head. Of course, in justice to him I had to tell him what I hesitated to say over the telephone. He had to know that this miserable business had been settled, and that, in point of fact, we had no further use for his services. He nodded again—the graven image !

" I understand. Still—I am not quite satisfied. Will you tie for me your figure of eight knot ? Take a piece of silk and a pearl, and show me how you do it."

I humoured him.

" Thanks. Now," he became more alert, " would it be possible for you to arrange an interview between Mr. Rappington, yourself, the Señora Miraflores, and myself ? "

" I think, in the circumstances, it would be difficult."

" In view of the fact that Mrs. Pengarvis has surrendered ? "

" Exactly."

" Why did she surrender ? "

" She is old and tired ; she sets, perhaps, an inordinate value on peace of mind."

Again he nodded, humming to himself. I dislike inarticulate noises.

" You will never regret doing what I ask, Mr. Corwen."

" It shall be done," I said.

VI.

IT was done—not without sharp protest from Rappington. He wanted, naturally enough, to wash his hands of a dirty business. I wanted to wash the pretty hands of my little lady, but it was futile to admit that to Rappington. Nevertheless, to gain his assent, I had to use my wits. Impey had something up his sleeve. He had surprised us over the emeralds ; he was a man of surprises. Rappington had to admit that. I appealed to his common sense.

" From your knowledge of Charles Impey, do you think that he would ask us to do anything unwise or inexpedient ? "

" But, my good fellow, the business is settled. It might become unsettled."

" I pin my faith to Impey. He earned more than his fee before."

" Bother you, Corwen, you are an obstinate old pig. Have it your own way. I shall not butt in. Make it a party of three."

I had to leave it at that.

Given a free hand, I governed myself accordingly. I dissembled with the Señora. She might, or might not, know that Mrs. Pengarvis had surrendered, so I asked her to call upon me at eleven, to look at some pearls which I had selected out of our stock. She promised to be punctual.

Impey arrived first. He has a sense of the dramatic lacking in me. When I told him that Rappington refused to be present, he smiled pleasantly and made a cryptic remark : " You will be head of this firm some day, Mr. Corwen." Then he busied himself with the arrangement of chairs. I was to sit at my desk, which stands at right angles to a large window. The Señora would sit facing the light. Impey, if he sat down, would have his back to the window. He took off an overcoat, and asked me what I thought of his kit. He had discarded rough tweeds and appeared in well-cut trousers and frock-coat.

" You need not introduce me to the Señora. I am one of your salesmen. I have brought in the pearls. I am prepared to answer questions about pearls. You can address me formally as Mr. Impey. When the Señora comes, ask me to fetch her string. I'll put it in my pocket here and now. Explain to the Señora that in this establishment I am *the* expert on pearls."

He grinned at me reassuringly.

VII.

THE SEÑORA, considering that she came from the Land of To-morrow, was fairly punctual. She drifted in more saccharine than ever, distilling some perfume too pungent for my nostrils.

" Am I to have my string again as it was, dear Mr. Corwen ? "

She didn't know.

I dispatched " our " Mr. Impey for her necklace. Upon a pad of white satin, under the Señora's nose, gleamed some lovely pearls.

" *Ohé !* The beauties ! " she exclaimed, as she sat down. She opened a small fan and fanned herself gracefully, glancing at me over the edge of it. Impey came back, carrying her string in his hand.

" Mr. Impey," said I, " is an expert on pearls. He is most interested in your string."

" But, surely, not *now*. I—I hate my string because there are false pearls in it. I have never worn false pearls."

" May I ask you a question, Madam ? " said Impey.

" But, of course——"

" How did you find out that this pearl, for example, was an imitation ? "

He touched the pearl next to the centre pearl.

" I did not find out for a long time. Then somebody, a friend, tell me."

" Ah, he *knew*. He detected the difference at once." She nodded. " He didn't test it ? "

" Oh, no. As you say—he knew."

" I have no wish to be indiscreet, but your friend, who knew, had no difficulty in detecting the other pearls that were not genuine ? "

" It was as easy for him as for you. For me I know nothing ; I—I have to trust everybody. This is the first time I have been deceived."

" But perhaps you are wiser now. Will you take this pearl in your hand and tell me whether it is real or sham ? "

As he spoke she was still fanning herself gently. She laid down the fan, removed her left glove, and took the pearl. Obviously she was puzzled. Impey drew from his pocket a spool of silk. To-day such spools are sold with a thin wire attachment, which makes the threading of pearls easier.

" One moment, Madam. This, I can assure you, is a real pearl." He picked up

the largest pearl lying upon the white satin pad, threaded it dexterously. Then he passed the threaded pearl and the spool of silk to the Señora, saying lightly: "If you will thread the pearl I gave you just now on to the silk and let it rest against the real pearl I think you will detect the difference."

The Señora was surprised; and so was I, for the two pearls were startlingly alike. She threaded the pearl quite easily and held up both to the light. I could see no difference.

"*Ojala!* How stupid I am!" Impey spoke raspingly.

"Pardon me. You are as clever as any woman I have ever met in my life, and for twenty years I studied clever criminals at Scotland Yard. I could arrest you on the evidence in my hands. You have convicted yourself. Please don't speak till I have finished. I am going to tell Mr. Corwen, not you, exactly what you have done. I know all about you. You came here posing as a rich woman, but you wanted to marry a rich man. You sank nearly all your available capital in a string of pearls. That string was an advertisement for you. Mrs. Pengarvis told everybody about it. But you needed ready money. You walked into a certain shop on a certain day—I have the dates—and bought a string of false pearls as like your own string as possible. You mixed up the two strings exactly as you had seen Mr. Corwen do in this room. You substituted false pearls for real pearls, intending to sell the real pearls later on. No man could have detected the sham pearls without testing them. You are a shrewd judge of human nature. You knew that Mrs. Pengarvis would do anything to prevent a public scandal. You fastened suspicion upon her, your friend. But you slipped up, clever as you are. You forgot that you are left-handed. You were fanning yourself with your left hand; you removed the glove from your left hand, you threaded that pearl with your left hand; and the knots you made in your own string are left-handed knots——"

He stopped his indictment, for the Señora had collapsed.

Impey came back, carrying her string in expert on pearls. He is most

his hand. "Mr. Impey," said I, "is an interested in your string."

I ASKED Impey, at the first opportunity, what had made him suspect the Señora of stealing her own pearls.

"I took her string to the window. Your knots were figures of eight. The other knots were ordinary grannies, double grannies between the larger pearls, single grannies between the small pearls. Take a piece of string and tie a granny with your right hand. Tie the same knot with your left hand and note the difference. It is the same reversed. Knots are a hobby of mine. I knew that the knots in the Señora's string were tied by a left-handed person. That night I dined at the Señora's hotel. I satisfied myself that she was left-handed. She has a striking appearance and one or two tricks. She caresses a dimple in her cheek; she may have studied Delsartean movements. I visited four shops where the best sham pearls are sold. In the fourth shop an intelligent young woman recalled a customer whom she took to be a Spanish lady who caressed a dimple in her cheek. She had bought a string of false pearls to match the string of real pearls which she took from her neck and laid on the counter. The young woman remembered that her customer examined about twenty strings before she bought the one she carried away with her. Too easy, Mr. Corwen."

But I was not of his opinion.

Mrs. Pengarvis refused to prosecute. She said to me with her arch smile:—

"You see, Corwen, I am sorry for her. She played her little game—and lost. I have played so many little games—and won."

She laughed gaily.

(Next month: "Playing the Game.")

THESE THRILLING ARTICLES ARE FACT—NOT FICTION.

Cases from My Crime-Book

By

H. ASHTON-WOLFE

(Interpreter at the Criminal Courts)

Illustrated by
F. E. HILEY

AUTHOR'S NOTE

My profession as interpreter has brought me constantly in touch with the great criminal investigation centres of the world, and I have many times become intimate with some of the more interesting criminals of modern times.

The stories which I have selected for this series can be found in the official records, only one or two details having been rearranged in order to avoid giving pain and reopening old wounds.

I have myself taken part either in the investigation or the final trials of the criminals. Several of the cases I have specially selected because of the ingenuity displayed both by the law-breakers and by the investigators.

No. VII. THE BOGUS DEATH-RAY

I HAD been working very hard and was glad when the moment arrived for my summer holidays. That year I had planned to visit the Lombardi lakes. A few days before my departure I was invited by M. Dufresne to a dinner given in honour of an Italian colleague, Signor Lanfranchi. I had been chatting for some time with this famous detective and chief of the Milanese "Questura," when M. Dufresne came and sat down beside me with a queer smile.

"Were you not planning to spend your vacation in the South?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied. "I have been telling Signor Lanfranchi that I intend to cross from Switzerland to Italy on foot, over the Simplon Pass."

M. Dufresne nodded sympathetically. "*Une belle promenade.* Call in to-morrow at the office; I have something to tell you."

The next morning I called on M. Dufresne as he had requested. I found an enormously stout man with him, who was evidently a terrible sufferer from asthma—for the room was filled with the pungent fumes of stramonium, and I saw that a preparation of this drug was sizzling and burning in a jar on the table. M. Dufresne introduced him as M. Saillard, chief engineer of

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the Whitehead torpedo factory at San Tropez, on the Mediterranean. The chief of the Paris Sûreté explained that M. Saillard was interested in the invention of a young Italian named Mario Donati, who claimed to have discovered a mysterious ray, by means of which torpedoes and mines could be exploded at a distance of several miles. The famous firm which M. Saillard represented had empowered him to acquire this invention after a satisfactory demonstration. The inventor had insisted on the payment of a sum of money as guarantee of good faith, and in order to be able to construct his model.

This money M. Saillard had already sent to Donati. He was now going to Italy to test the apparatus, for which he was to pay several million francs, if it proved efficient. Certain private inquiries regarding this Mario Donati had caused him to feel uneasy, and he had requested M. Dufresne, who was a distant relation, to place someone at his disposal who spoke Italian perfectly and who would accompany him in order to protect him against fraud.

"You understand," M. Dufresne concluded. "You are free to refuse, for I cannot send you officially. We cannot interfere with what an Italian does on Italian territory; that is for the Questura to see to, and I have spoken to Signor Lanfranchi, who returns to Milan to-day; but this gentleman here is my good friend and you would oblige me by accepting. Besides, you were going to Italy, and this investigation need not interfere much with your holiday. You will travel with M. Saillard as his interpreter and receive a handsome fee. What do you say?"

"Even without the added inducement of the fee, I shall be only too glad to help," I replied.

"Very well, *mon ami*, then be ready to leave in two days. You had better travel by the seven-thirty express train from the Gare de Lyon. My friend will meet you at the Hotel Regina at Stresa and you will continue to Como together, for the experiments are to take place there."

I WAS swallowing a hasty dinner in the buffet of the P.L.M. railway station, determined to forget all about mystery rays and to enjoy the journey to Lake Maggiore, when to my astonishment I heard a well-known voice at the table behind me say in a lazy Western drawl:—

"Well, Mr. Jennings, I'd think more of this fellow Donati and his machine if he were not so slick in obtaining money before he has shown what he can do."

"So should I," I replied, leaning over the leather division and holding out my hand with a smile. "You've put your finger on the weak spot, Bannister. But what are you doing in this *galère?*"

"Good heavens," Bannister exclaimed, jumping up and gripping my hand. "Come round, come round; we are just having dinner. This is Ezra P. Jennings, of the American and Continental Trust Company." Then, after introducing me to a lean, tall, thin-lipped American, he continued: "We are off to Como, on—well, it seems you know why; and thereby hangs a tale, eh?"

I ordered the waiter to move my meal to my friend's table and sat down. I did not feel at liberty to mention my errand before a stranger, and Bannister appeared to be in the same boat, but the man Jennings decided for us.

"Say," he began, looking shrewdly from one to the other, "I'd best put my cards on the table; then perhaps I'll learn something worth while. I am acting as agent only, but I'm responsible for the money already paid. I've acquired the option for a certain invention and given a big sum for that option. We are off now to see the invention demonstrated before buying it. My friend Bannister has been instructed by his boss in New York to come with me to see I'm not swindled. Now, what can you add to that?"

"I am also going, in the same capacity, for another gentleman, of a different nationality, who has also paid a certain sum for that same invention."

Bannister nodded; then he poured out a glass of wine for each of us, saying: "Well, here's to a pleasant trip. We travel together, I suppose; it may be that this Italian has an invention to sell and wants to make sure of a buyer; if not—well, I guess between the two of us we can trip him up."

We arranged to meet at Como at the Hotel du Lac, but as strangers, since thus we should more easily discover any trickery, by secretly comparing notes. I decided not to mention to M. Saillard the fact that Ezra Jennings was also a buyer. I found the latter waiting for me at the Hotel Regina, where he at once introduced me to a tall, slender Italian, Signor Donati, the inventor of the ray.

MARIO DONATI was the handsomest man I have ever met. Dark, with curly black hair and classic features such as one sees in classic statues, his broad brow denoted intellectual power, and his charming smile was frank and disarming. In fact, I liked Donati at once, and I felt sure that every woman must inevitably fall in love with the man. So I imagine the hero of "La Tosca," that other Mario, must have looked. With him was a tall, pleasant girl of the Sicilian

type, whom he introduced as his *fiancée*, Eleonora Fiori. The name suited her! While Donati talked with the vivacity and natural fluency of utterance given to so many of his race, I saw that her eyes were fixed on him with an expression of adoration, but the flash of her black eyes and the curl of her lips when her lover's gaze unconsciously followed some more than usually attractive woman amongst the fashionable crowd thronging the hall warned me that Mario would do well to wear a steel doublet if he intended to trifle with other beauties.

M. Saillard was anxious to see the invention demonstrated as soon as possible, so we left the next morning. I suggested that Signor Donati should take the train to Milan *viâ* Arona and then continue by train to Como, which would give him time to prepare his apparatus, whilst we travelled by the lake steamer to Luino, Lugano, and Como, a longer but more pleasant way. In reality I had no intention of doing anything of the kind. Mario—I love to call him by that picturesque name—came to the landing-stage and saw us embark. At Laveno I left the boat, after explaining my intention to M. Saillard, and, hiring a car at a garage, drove through Varese straight to Como. In this way I reached there two hours before Donati could arrive by train, even if for once the easy-going *direttissimo* were not hours late, as it generally is. I found Bannister and Jennings already installed at the Hotel du Lac. I suggested that both Bannister and I should go to a smaller place near by, thus apparently leaving Jennings, who did not speak the language, to the tender mercies of Mario. I had taken care to speak very broken Italian myself and to profess an entire ignorance of the numerous dialects. I have always found that in my profession it is more useful to know the patois of a country than its language, for those who wish to converse in a secret tongue before strangers have a strange belief that no one ever learns these dialects. To a certain extent they are right, for I do not suppose any foreigner, however well he spoke English, would understand one word of Gaelic. So I had spent many hours learning Provençal Milanese and Neapolitan. Towards the hour of Mario's train Bannister and I sat down in a small wine-shop near the station where we could watch the exit. We observed him arrive with the girl Eleonora and a man we had not seen before—a furtive, sly-looking Neapolitan. After a short conversation Donati walked in the direction of the lake, whilst the girl and the man jumped into a cab and drove away. We followed the inventor to the hotel and saw him greet Jennings and then sit down on the veranda, from where he could watch the steamer arrive. I managed to mingle with the crowd on the landing-stage and so was able to walk with M. Saillard to the hotel. Here Donati, after greeting us, introduced the American.

"Tell your employer," he said to me, "that Mr. Jennings is also going to be present at the experiments, for if M. Saillard does not buy my patent then the American will. By the way, do you speak English?"

"No," I said. "I can read it a little, but that is all. It is a difficult language for a Frenchman." Then I turned and translated what Donati had said.

"When does the demonstration take place?" M. Saillard asked.

"Not until to-morrow night," was the unexpected reply, "for the excellent Cavaliere Giuseppe Ricci-Ferroni, an admiral of our Navy, is coming to-morrow evening and he is placing at my disposal some regulation floating mines, which my ray will explode. You can understand that without his influence I should never be allowed to use the lake for such a purpose. He believes that I shall sell my secret to Italy," and Mario laughed suddenly. "But what will they pay me? Nothing. Yet, should both you gentlemen feel dissatisfied with the results, why, then, perhaps the admiral will buy my invention after all."

"I see," said M. Saillard, his huge form quivering with rage, "you are playing us one against the other—the highest bidder wins. Beware, monsieur—we have paid you a deposit."

"Which is in the Banca Italiana, and which I will return—here—now—if you are not content." And Mario's eyes flashed with well-simulated rage, whilst his hand half pulled a cheque-book from his pocket. Oh, it was well done—and M. Saillard withdrew from the skirmish with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Are these bombs or mines coming by train?" I inquired, as though quite ignorant of technical questions.

"Oh, no! That would be too dangerous; they are already here—in a Government deposit near Bellaggio. One of the admiral's men will row out to the middle of the lake with a mine and anchor it there. I shall be up in the hills behind the Villa Carlotta at Cadenabbia, and when the boatman signals with a lantern from the shore I shall cause the mine to explode. To-morrow, when the Cavaliere Ricci-Ferroni is here, I will show you the generator of my ray and explain it to you."

After a dreary table-d'hôte dinner Donati wished us good night, pretending some work which he had to do. I waited until I

saw Bannister stroll unconcernedly after him and then slipped down to the lake, where I knew I should find boats in plenty for hire. I rather mistrusted the boatmen, and I had a healthy respect for the razor-sharp wits of Donati, so I asked to be rowed for an hour over the lake, expressing my desire to enjoy the soft summer night. Then, when we passed one of the larger villages, I feigned to be seized with a wish to visit it, and told him to land me and leave me there, informing him that I would probably come back later by another boat. As soon as he had rowed away I arranged with the owner of one of the motor-boats plying for hire to take me to Bellaggio, which is near the opposite end of the lake. I had chosen a fast little craft and was soon there. Telling my man to wait, I sat down on a seat at the water-front where I could not be seen.

Eleonora Fiori, Donati's Sicilian sweetheart.

An hour later I saw a beautiful fast launch glide up to the mooring pillars. In it was Mario, alone. It was no easy matter to follow him unobserved, but I had taken the precaution of putting on rubber-soled shoes and my clothes were dark. Besides, I knew Bellaggio well, and there is only one main street leading out of the little town.

Half an hour's walk brought us to a lonely spot surrounded by spreading trees, where I saw an octagonal building of stone with a stout door but no windows. As Donati approached, he began to whistle a popular tune, which was evidently a signal, for at the sound a dark shape came from the shadows. I could not see the face, but it was a woman, and I felt sure that it was the charming Eleonora. I watched Mario greet her warmly, and then, after manipulating something that made a grating sound, he pushed back the wooden door of the building, and they both disappeared inside. I did not dare to approach near enough to see what was going on in what I guessed was the store-house for the mines, for I thought it quite possible that the man I had seen at the station might be watching, so I returned to my waiting boatman and arrived, an hour later, at the hotel. Here I found my friend Bannister, very annoyed at not having been able to follow Donati. From him I learned that the motor-launch in which he had come to Bellaggio was kept in a boathouse some distance from the town. I related what I had accomplished, which was to find out where the mines were deposited. We felt pretty certain that in some way Mario tampered with them, although how he did it was as yet his secret.

The next morning a gorgeous person arrived at the hotel, for whom the whole staff, from the manager downwards, turned out *en masse*. It was the Admiral Ricci-Ferroni, a swarthy, stout, and pompous little man, who strutted about with the grace of a turkey-cock. But there was no mistaking the awe and respect with which he was regarded. I could see that even matter-of-fact Jennings was impressed. With Signor Ferroni was a young girl of such surpassing beauty that it was with incredulity I learned that she was the admiral's daughter, Giuseppina Ricci-Ferroni. The greeting between handsome Mario and this dazzling flower of Italy left no doubt in my mind as to why she had accompanied the admiral, and that if she was not interested in the mystery ray she was at least interested in its inventor. Remembering the Sicilian, Eleonora, I wondered what she would say when she heard of this new arrival and saw the languorous regards of her lover. We were formally presented to the admiral and his daughter, although what explanation was given to the haughty official for our presence I do not know. At any rate, he tolerated us, that is the most I can say.

In the afternoon a bulky machine arrived by car and was taken by the admiral's order to an empty room of the hotel. Here we all gathered for the explanation of his

We all gathered in an empty room of invention which Donati

invention which Donati had promised us. Bannister was not present; he had until now kept discreetly in the background. When we were all seated, Donati pulled a canvas cover from a complicated mechanism which appeared to me to be chiefly composed of convex and concave mirrors rotating on their axes. Suspended in the centre was a cupola of crystal. The lecture was a long flow of technical jargon, but which I could see impressed Signor Ferroni very much. M. Saillard seemed rather sceptical. I translated the long explanation into French, and thus Ezra Jennings, who also spoke that language, was able to follow. The gist of the demonstration was, roughly, that a musical note, produced on the crystal bell by friction, was carried by a beam of ultra-violet rays to a distance of several miles, and its vibration was so calculated that it caused any unstable substance, such as melinite, to explode. The particular vibration and the method of transmitting it on an invisible ray was the secret of the inventor.

I was watching the girl Giuseppina closely during the harangue, and I soon realized that she already was or would soon become another victim of handsome Mario. Some exciting days were in store for us, that was certain, and no musical mystery ray was needed for the spontaneous explosion I felt

the hotel for the explanation of his had promised us.

sure would shortly take place if the two girls met.

The apparatus was taken by boat to Cadenabbia and carried to an eminence some distance inland. A motor lorry also arrived with a large battery of accumulators, a converter, and several high-tension transformers.

We all waited impatiently for the night. Orders had been given by the police that no boat should remain in the neighbourhood of Bellaggio between midnight and one a.m. Soon after dinner Mario departed to prepare for the experiment, and we followed in a large launch. I had arranged for Bannister to come also—but we purposely spoke French. It was a long walk up the hillside, from where we could see the dark surface of Lake Como stretched out below us like a sombre valley. It was a beautiful warm night; the sky, glittering with a host of stars such as one never sees in northern countries, was now and again illuminated by the flashing searchlights of the Swiss revenue stations. We spoke little. Around us myriads of tree-frogs and crickets croaked and chirped in all the notes of the musical scale, and tiny bats fluttered and circled about our heads. Donati and the charming Giuseppina sat near the dark shapeless mass of the ray generator. Abruptly M. Saillard rose and focused his night-glass on the distant shore.

"There is a boat with a lantern," he said.

At the same moment a church clock chimed twelve.

Mario rose and threw away the cigarette he had been smoking. We saw a small electric bulb abruptly illuminate his apparatus with a red glow, and by its light he manipulated wires and switches. Then he extinguished the lamp and said :—

"*Va bene*—tell me when the boatman waves his lantern from the shore."

We waited in tense silence until M. Saillard, who was watching through his glass, said :—

"Now—I see the signal." Instantly we heard a low hum and a sweet musical vibration emanate from the shadowy machine. Several seconds passed, and then a huge blood-red flame rose, spreading like a fan from the surface of the water, and a moment later we heard the dull boom and reverberation of the explosion. The admiral jumped up excitedly.

"*E fatto, é fatto,* the mine has exploded. Signor Donati, you are a genius."

Jennings and Saillard also murmured their approval, but less warmly.

"I must insist on more than one demonstration," the American said

"That is my view also," added M. Saillard ; "but above all I wish to examine the mines before they are placed in the boat. I have also brought a small cylinder containing a new explosive. It will float, and I wish to have it exposed to your ray."

"*Benissimo,*" replied Donati. "To-morrow night, if Cavaliere Ricci-Ferroni will permit it, we will have several mines placed at various distances, and also the cylinder of monsieur here, and I will explode them all." This assurance startled both Jennings and the Frenchman, and I sensed the unwonted respect in their voices when next they spoke to the inventor.

We all returned to the hotel, but Bannister and I left at once and settled down to watch from the windows of the place where we were staying, and which was almost opposite. Barely half an hour had passed when we saw Mario leave the hotel by a side door, but instead of going to the boathouse, as we had expected, he stopped in the shadow of the trees and whistled. In answer, a window of the suite where the admiral was staying on the first floor opened noiselessly, and the girl Giuseppina came out on to the balcony. As soon as he perceived her, Mario walked quickly across the road and we heard the murmur of conversation carried on in low tones.

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AFTER lunch, which we ate at the same table with the inventor and the others, M. Saillard passed me a slip of paper with his cigarette case, and I read: "Am going with Donati to Bellaggio after I have written some letters." I knew that the letters were a means to give me time to reach there before Donati. We were lucky enough to board one of the little lake steamers unnoticed. I had obtained a large hook from an ironmonger, and this I had tied to a long rope. After several attempts it caught on the stone ledge of the roof, and a few moments later Bannister and I were stretched flat beside the skylight. Soon Saillard and

the Italian came up the path, accompanied by a man in uniform, who unlocked the door. The cylinder, which the Frenchman carried in a large leather bag, was placed on the floor and the door relocked by the official. It was just at dusk that we heard stealthy footsteps, then a grating sound told us that the door was being opened, and a few minutes later we perceived the man with whom Mario had come to Como, and the girl Eleonora, enter the building, shutting the door behind them. A lamp carried by the girl illuminated the interior sufficiently for us to see what went on. The man unwrapped a powerful ratchet-drill, and for a long time he worked with this on the Frenchman's steel cylinder. It appeared to give him much trouble, for several times he paused and changed the drills. At last he rose and extracted something from a glass tube which he then inserted in the hole he had made. I saw that whatever the substance it was very minute, and he afterwards used a fine wire to push it in.

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"We should certainly go skywards," I said. "But what the devil are they putting into the bomb?"

When his work was finished, the man examined all the mines in turn, and then, apparently satisfied, he and the girl left, locking the door. We gave them half an hour, then, loosely doubling our rope around the iron hook so that we could pull it after us, we climbed down.

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"If Mario has any spy watching for him, that fool will spoil everything," Bannister growled. Luckily the man left the two gendarmes on guard at the railway station and walked alone to a little hotel, where we had arranged to meet him. We quickly explained what we wanted. He was to go by boat with Bannister to Bellaggio and arrest the two confederates when they were busy in the Government building; for we knew that some alteration of their method would be necessary for the experiment on

We all gathered in an empty room of invention which Donati

invention which Donati had promised us. Bannister was not present; he had until now kept discreetly in the background. When we were all seated, Donati pulled a canvas cover from a complicated mechanism which appeared to me to be chiefly composed of convex and concave mirrors rotating on their axes. Suspended in the centre was a cupola of crystal. The lecture was a long flow of technical jargon, but which I could see impressed Signor Ferroni very much. M. Saillard seemed rather sceptical. I translated the long explanation into French, and thus Ezra Jennings, who also spoke that language, was able to follow. The gist of the demonstration was, roughly, that a musical note, produced on the crystal bell by friction, was carried by a beam of ultra-violet rays to a distance of several miles, and its vibration was so calculated that it caused any unstable substance, such as melinite, to explode. The particular vibration and the method of transmitting it on an invisible ray was the secret of the inventor.

I was watching the girl Giuseppina closely during the harangue, and I soon realized that she already was or would soon become another victim of handsome Mario. Some exciting days were in store for us, that was certain, and no musical mystery ray was needed for the spontaneous explosion I felt

the hotel for the explanation of his had promised us.

sure would shortly take place if the two girls met.

The apparatus was taken by boat to Cadenabbia and carried to an eminence some distance inland. A motor lorry also arrived with a large battery of accumulators, a converter, and several high-tension transformers.

We all waited impatiently for the night. Orders had been given by the police that no boat should remain in the neighbourhood of Bellaggio between midnight and one a.m. Soon after dinner Mario departed to prepare for the experiment, and we followed in a large launch. I had arranged for Bannister to come also—but we purposely spoke French. It was a long walk up the hillside, from where we could see the dark surface of Lake Como stretched out below us like a sombre valley. It was a beautiful warm night; the sky, glittering with a host of stars such as one never sees in northern countries, was now and again illuminated by the flashing searchlights of the Swiss revenue stations. We spoke little. Around us myriads of tree-frogs and crickets croaked and chirped in all the notes of the musical scale, and tiny bats fluttered and circled about our heads. Donati and the charming Giuseppina sat near the dark shapeless mass of the ray generator. Abruptly M. Saillard rose and focused his night-glass on the distant shore.

"There is a boat with a lantern," he said.

At the same moment a church clock chimed twelve.

Mario rose and threw away the cigarette he had been smoking. We saw a small electric bulb abruptly illuminate his apparatus with a red glow, and by its light he manipulated wires and switches. Then he extinguished the lamp and said :—

"*Va bene*—tell me when the boatman waves his lantern from the shore."

We waited in tense silence until M. Saillard, who was watching through his glass, said :—

"Now—I see the signal." Instantly we heard a low hum and a sweet musical vibration emanate from the shadowy machine. Several seconds passed, and then a huge blood-red flame rose, spreading like a fan from the surface of the water, and a moment later we heard the dull boom and reverberation of the explosion. The admiral jumped up excitedly.

"*E fatto, é fatto,* the mine has exploded. Signor Donati, you are a genius."

Jennings and Saillard also murmured their approval, but less warmly.

"I must insist on more than one demonstration," the American said

"That is my view also," added M. Saillard ; "but above all I wish to examine the mines before they are placed in the boat. I have also brought a small cylinder containing a new explosive. It will float, and I wish to have it exposed to your ray."

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land. Evidently, in some way, it had been the water penetrating through a minute hole which had caused the explosions.

WHEN I returned to the hotel Jennings signalled to me that Donati had accepted the final test, and that he had invited the American to accompany him to Bellaggio to fetch the mine.

Shortly after their departure a 'phone call from Bannister informed me that the girl and the man had been caught just as they were marking one of the three remaining mines with a small cross, but before they had been able to tamper with it. They were now locked in the local police station and all signs of the sharp struggle which had taken place in the little tower had been effaced. To make doubly sure, my friend told me, he had wiped the mark off the iron sphere and made a similar cross on another one. As we fully expected, no explosion followed the chime of the bell, although Donati manipulated his machine for a long time. Then a wire fused and the inventor informed the American that something had gone wrong with his mirrors.

Jennings and Donati returned to the hotel late at night—arguing angrily. The inventor insisted that the reason for the failure of the demonstration was because his batteries had somehow given out. In the morning he would obtain others and prove that his ray was as efficient on land as on water. In the meantime he would return to Cadenabbia and carefully examine his apparatus in order to make quite sure that nothing else had gone wrong with it.

During the absence of Jennings and Donati we had invited the admiral and the Frenchman to my room, and here I related all that we had discovered. The admiral was incredulous. Then, when we pressed him, he admitted that he also had paid a large sum to Donati as a deposit, and that he had been given to understand that we were merely scientifically interested in the invention. As soon as Jennings joined us, M. Saillard and the American both showed him their contracts and receipts.

Finally I invited them all to come with me to Bellaggio. We placed one of the mines in a boat and instructed the boatman to drop it overboard as usual. Ten minutes later it exploded. The admiral danced with rage. He fiercely ordered the Italian detective to arrest Donati immediately.

We then went to the police station and arranged for the prisoners to be conducted to Como. When we arrived we heard that the detective and his two gendarmes were searching the woods where the " ray generator " was still standing. Towards morning we received the startling information that the motor launch belonging to Donati was gone. Telephone messages were hastily sent to every town along the lake. It was probable that the Italian heard the explosion of our mine and, guessing that his schemes had miscarried, he had simply escaped by water to Switzerland.

We were about to sit down to an early breakfast when the admiral burst excitedly into the dining-room. His face was purple and his eyes starting from his head.

" My daughter ! " he gasped, waving a letter. " She it was who warned this *truffa'ore*—this thief. I told her what had happened before we went to Bellaggio. And now—now she has fled with him—my Giuseppina ! " And the old fellow sank into a chair, sobbing convulsively. I took the letter from his shaking hand.

" *Dear Father,*" she had written,—" *I love Mario—and I have gone with him. Do not pursue him with your vengeance or you will make me very unhappy. I shall kill myself if he is arrested. We are going to start life anew and he is going to marry me.*"

I read no farther—it was quite enough. At that crucial moment the Italian detective stalked into the room—dirty, dishevelled, his fierce moustache drooping sadly and his untidy hair covered with burrs and bits of grass—and behind him appeared the two gendarmes, both carrying handcuffs. They had spent the night crawling about the forest. It was too much—Bannister and I roared with laughter at the sight ; although we immediately apologized to the stricken father. What he said later to the disgusted officer I don't know, but his influence evidently stopped all further proceedings, for we saw the three officials leave shortly before luncheon. Jennings to my surprise developed an unexpected sense of humour, for during the morning he constantly burst into short, cackling laughter.

LATER in the day the Sicilian girl was brought to the hotel, and we questioned her as to the means employed to cause the bombs to explode. She was sullen and refused to speak. Whilst we were plying her with questions a telegram arrived for Signor Ricci-Ferroni. Hastily opening it, he cried :—

" It is from my daughter. She and Donati are on their way to America ; they are going to get married on the ship to-day."

Like a fury the girl Eleonora snatched the telegram from his hand and read it. Then the storm burst—and it was terrible. But we learned what we wished to know. A small hole had been drilled into each of the mines and sodium inserted. The hole had then been closed again with a substance

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which slowly melted when the mine was dropped in the lake; as soon as the water reached and ignited the sodium the bomb of course exploded. The apparatus with its mirrors and crystal bell was just a beautiful joke; yet it had served its purpose, for, thanks to the clever combination of scientific theories and sodium, Donati had swindled three people out of a round ten thousand pounds.

The same evening a second telegram arrived for the admiral, informing him that his daughter was now the Signora Donati. Jennings smiled grimly.

"There'll be a detective waiting in New York for handsome Mario when he arrives.

I've prepared the cable which will put him where he'll swindle no one for some years."

At the words Signor Ricci-Ferroni jumped up.

"No, no, signor, you must not! I will repay what you have lost. He is now my son-in-law."

For a long time the American was obdurate. At last he said:—

"Well, all right—fix it so that both M. Saillard and I get our money back and we'll let bygones be bygones; but in that case you must let Miss Eleonora go at once. Poor girl, I like her and I feel very sorry for her. Hi, there, waiter! A bottle of champagne to drink to the bride. He's a lucky devil, that Mario; however, I'll keep an eye on him in the States, for he is not going to double-cross his wife—I'll see to that, admiral. Well, here's to their best health."

(Next month: "Kiki: A Tale of Hanoi Shan, the Spider.")

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 171.

(The Third of the Series.)

Two sees adjoin: for *one* and *two*
Richard and Swithun are your clue.

1. For lunar leaping won a fabled fame.
2. From royal motto learn the French for "shame."
3. I gobble up your eggs, poor crocodile.
4. Language of ancient dwellers by the Nile.
5. A drug consumed upon a drowsy bed.
6. In greeting cardinals the word is said.
7. Here Persian king counted his ships below.
8. To the Apocrypha for this you go.
9. Expositor with four-fold *ease* descried.
10. To world and gun alike may be applied.

KING COLE.

Answers to Acrostic No. 171 *should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor,* THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on October* 11*th.*

To every light one alternative answer may be sent; it should be written at the side. At the foot of his answer every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 170.

(The Second of the Series.)

THE London thoroughfare we see
(What's bought in it just right will be)
Has been so altered that I vow
John Nash would hardly know it now.

1. Render yourselves! I trust my greeting
   Will indicate the place of meeting.
2. Gives rides to children at the Zoo;
   His trunk he always carries, too.
3. The bird did up and down meander;
   Could one address him just "Uganda"?
4. The sweet wild rose, but I admit
   An ant is in the heart of it.
5. The value of a Spade one chooses,
   'Tis worth the sum of all the Muses.
6. It sounds a charge, in bands 'tis known,
   Of course one must not blow one's own.

BOODLEBAR.

1. R	endezvou	S
2. E	lephan	T
3. G	ande	R
4. E	glantin	E
5. N	in	E
6. T	rumpe	T

THIRTY-FIFTH SERIES: RESULT.

FULL marks in the series were gained by Bobundara, Bumps, Deen, Jumbo, Ludo, Mancu, Peci, Peleus, Skat, Slugo, Solus, Yoko, and Zyme, and these thirteen solvers will divide the prizes. The Editor has increased the prize money, and each of the winners will receive a cheque for one pound. They will be ineligible for acrostic prizes in the thirty-sixth series, now running.

Bobundara is Mrs. Ranald Paton, Coldon, Port of Menteith, Stirling; Bumps is Miss N. B. Macfarlane, 3, St. Colme Street, Edinburgh; Deen is Mr. J. Mulhall, Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny, Ireland; Jumbo is Mr. H. Draper, 27, Stormont Road, Clapham, S.W.11; Ludo is Mr. W. Rodwell, 75, Tradescant Road, London, S.W.8; Mancu is Mr. L. A. Jones, Asterley, Goldsmid Road, Tonbridge, Kent; Peci is Mr. G. E. Matthews, 53, Stockwell Green, S.W.9; Peleus is Rev. P. Lewis, 49, South Road, Faversham; Skat is Mr. C. S. Crosby, 36, Hills Road, Cambridge; Slugo is Mr. J. J. Holloway, Lyndale, Howard Road, New Malden, Surrey; Solus is Mr. F. Dale, Mascalls, King's Road, Berkhamsted, Herts; Yoko is Mr. F. Rawson, 11, Creffield Road, Ealing Common, W.5; Zyme is Mr. J. W. Pulsford, 46, Holmewood Road, S.W.2.

The OUTSIDER

By

H. H. BASHFORD

Illustrated by
W. BRYCE HAMILTON

I.

BERT CORK, immaculately arrayed in what he believed to be the height of the English fashion, stood with his hands in his pockets staring across Brook Street from the main entrance of Claridge's Hotel. He was fat and pink, with rather prominent eyes, a large and good-tempered mouth, a tooth-brush moustache, and slightly too much brilliantine on his thick, carefully-parted hair. In fact, he was not, and he knew it, quite in the usual run of visitors to Claridge's, most of whom he had sized up, in so far as they were males, as being what his friends would have described as Sissies. It was an American phrase, because for the last twenty years, with the exception of four spent in France, he had been earning his living in the Middle West, where he had made a fortune in the selling of groceries. He had also married a wife there, who had run away from him, and whom he had divorced just before the war.

In fact, though he had never become naturalized, he felt more American than English, and save for an odd day or two during his Army service, this was his first visit to London since he had left it at the age of twenty-three. His father and mother, who had kept a dairy in Kensington High Street, had by then already retired to Bournemouth, and both had died in 1918, shortly before his return to Chicago. His only other relation in England was an elder sister married to a butcher in Bristol, and though he had just spent a week with them and they had been very hospitable, they were obviously engrossed with their own affairs. He had not been sorry, therefore, to bid them a genial good-bye, and now, for three days, he had been alone in London, having the good time that he had been promising himself after a series of business conferences. He had been to four theatres, that was to say, and a couple of cabarets, had a few dances with a hired professional partner, and had exchanged some remarks, not always very successfully, with other guests at the hotel.

And, to tell the truth, he had had enough of it. It was a poor game, enjoying oneself alone. And it was another three weeks before he was due to sail for New York with one of his partners who was now in Italy. He turned abruptly, lit a cigarette, and caught the tail of an amused glance from a young married couple—obviously of the correct kind—with whom he had tried to be friendly the night before. They were evidently putting him down again as a bounder, if bounder was still the current expression. But probably it wasn't. The argot was always changing. And he was never quite sure of himself when he tried to make use of it.

Not that he minded much. In England, at any rate, he had always been regarded, he knew, as a bounder, both at his kindergarten and preparatory schools, and afterwards at Westminster, where he had stayed till he was sixteen. It was partly because he had been a bounder, indeed—but only partly—that Denny March had turned him down, the culminating factor in deciding him to try his luck in the United States. Denny March, by Jove! He wondered what would have happened to him if she

had said "Yes" instead of "No." It would at least have spared him the second-rate marriage that he had afterwards made in America.

But even if he had been her equal—what her father would have called a gentleman—it had always been John Bertram that she had loved, a nice fellow, too, quiet and distinguished-looking, the son of the Vicar of St. Gabriel's. They had all been at school together at the Phillimore Kindergarten. He never quite knew how his father had managed it, since the sons of tradesmen—at any rate, local and retail ones—had not, in those days, been generally admitted. But his father, like himself, had been pushing and thick-skinned—a stout, good-natured, prosperous person—and, anyway, he had gone there and sat in the same classroom with Denny and John and a dozen or so like them.

Denny had been eight then, a year younger than himself, the daughter of a doctor in a neighbouring square, and in one way and another he had contrived to keep in touch with her, though he had always remained, of course, her social inferior. Finally, at twenty-two, when he had succeeded his father as manager of the dairy business in Kensington High Street, he had asked her to marry him, not with much hope, but because it was his simple custom to go for what he wanted. Denny March—Denny Bertram now—he remembered her shy, candid eyes, and the fascinating way, or so it had seemed to him then, in which she had arranged her hair. He dropped into an arm-chair, with the beginnings of a sudden idea. John, who had been at Westminster with him, was two years his senior, and had gone straight from school into a firm of stock-jobbers, by whom he had soon been given a good position. Bert frowned for a moment. He had forgotten their names. But John had married Denny, he remembered, when he was about twenty-five, and had long since, no doubt, become a partner or set up in business on his own account. He summoned an attendant and asked for the telephone book.

"Wonder what they'd say," he thought, "if I looked 'em up?"

John Hannington Bertram—but the name wasn't in the book or in the current Post Office Directory. That might well be, of course, because they were living in the country. Or perhaps John had been killed in the war. He called the attendant again and asked his advice. But the quest appeared rather a difficult one.

"Of course, there's the public libraries," the man suggested. "You might find your friend's name, sir, in one of the outlying district directories—Croydon or such-like, or Richmond or Cricklewood—that's if he's still living in London."

Bert heaved himself out of his chair.

"Good idea," he said. It would be something to do. And a quarter of an hour later he was poring over a quiet table surrounded by volumes of names and addresses. And at last he found it—Bertram, John H., 19, Ardingly Road, Harlesden. It mightn't be his man, of course. But he guessed he'd go and see. He'd drop in this evening about six o'clock.

II.

FOR three days now John had had a headache, and he was glad that on Monday he was due for a fortnight's holiday, even though he couldn't afford this year to leave London except perhaps for a night or two in the Chilterns. But that would be something—he would persuade Denny to come, too—and, anyway, he could potter about the garden, doze in a chair, and try to forget for a few days the bank and all that was in it. Little enough of his, alas, except a perpetual overdraft, secured by his life policy and a hundred pounds of War Loan; and he began to brood again, for perhaps the thousandth time, on what would happen to the family if he fell ill and died.

It was a quarter-past six, and in five minutes the bus would reach its terminus at the Queen's Arms. His neighbour, Mr. Cogsley, climbed past him.

"Well, night-night," he said.

"Night-night."

Mr. Cogsley, who was an insurance agent, was getting out sooner, he had explained, to visit his married daughter. It was a mid-June evening, grey and close, and the side-streets were dusty, with paper lying about in them. If only he hadn't married, John thought, or if they had had no children, how free from anxiety they would both be to-day. They might even be in Kensington, in their first little flat, giving an occasional dinner-party and spending the week-ends in the country. But within ten months there had come a baby, and then several other things happened almost at once. His father had died, leaving very little money—barely enough to support John's invalid sister; and the jobbing firm had failed, and for some weeks—for nearly four months, in fact—he had been out of work. Then he had been offered, and, for the sake of Denny and the baby, had thankfully accepted, a post in a bank—a large bank, where promotion was slow, but where his salary would at least be secure.

And he would rise, of course. He was a man of good family. But meanwhile the flat was too costly. And they had moved to

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a little villa on the edge of a field in Harlesden, where for the first time they had a strip of garden. That would be pleasant, they had thought, for the baby, when she was old enough to run about. And two years later Denny had had another daughter, followed by a son in eighteen months. Then her father had died, leaving a widow and three other children—two of them at school still—and an income of three hundred a year; and Denny's mother had moved into the country, to a Midland town where there was a cheap grammar school. John would have liked to move too, if he could have afforded it, for his villa was no longer on the edge of a field. It was one in a sea of similar villas, to which his friends very rarely came.

That was understandable, of course, since neither he nor Denny had been able to maintain a real contact with them. They still read a little. But theatres were beyond their means, and dances and week-ends quite impossible. Gradually it had become clear that they had no common language with them, and presently the last of the survivors had vanished. Nobody had been unkind. There was nothing to grumble about. There were the three babies, and later there had come a fourth; and sometimes a fellow bank-clerk, living in much the same circumstances, would come in for tea on a Sunday afternoon. Denny had made friends, too, with their doctor's wife, and they sometimes played tennis in the vicarage garden on an undersized lawn, indifferently mown, with the doctor or vicar to make up a four. When Denny had a fifth baby they had given up a resident servant, and being a trifle old-fashioned in their ideas, John and the boy had taken up quarters in one bedroom and Denny and the two youngest in another. The two elder daughters shared the third, and it was tacitly understood that a phase of their life was over. Denny had cried a little. They were still rather in love with each other. But John hadn't had his rise, and there it was.

During this period the war had come and gone. For the first two years of it John had been retained as indispensable, and then for two years he had served as a private, returning with a liability to bad dreams. That was one of the reasons why he had dreaded the parting from Denny. It had been an enormous comfort to feel her beside him. But luckily they didn't come now, or not

very often, though he found it hard sometimes to get to sleep. He was nearly forty-five and pretty grey. Suppose he hadn't married and had saved all his surplus income. He thought of the honeymoon upon which he would now be able to take Denny—Paris, Avignon, the Italian Riviera. He felt in his pocket for his cigarettes—he allowed himself a packet every two days—and, fumbling about, pulled out a coal bill and a request from the Gas Light and Coke Company to be paid the following Tuesday. The conductor touched him on the shoulder.

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They slept the second night in Kendal, and the next morning Bert disappeared, coming back about eleven o'clock, bubbling over with a fresh discovery. He had found a cottage, he said, in a neighbouring valley, where the woman would put them up for a couple of days, in the heart of the hills, and at a cost almost ridiculously inexpensive. Here they left the car in an adjacent farm stable, rambled and basked to their hearts' content, and for long hours met never a soul but an occasional fisherman, shepherd, or climber. John was already tanned, and Denny, so Bert told her, looking fifteen years younger, and when the bill came it was so diminutive that Denny and John thought there must have been a mistake.

The woman caught Bert's eye.

" No, that's all right," she explained. " Of course I couldn't do it, not in the

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season. But just for two days like, it's another matter ; and I've put up some lunch for you in the car."

"Why, it's almost cheaper," laughed Denny, "than staying at home."

"Toss you who'll pay," said Bert, "for the lot," and since the sum was so small and the morning so divine, John agreed, and Bert produced a coin.

"Heads it's me," he said, "and tails you." And heads it was, and half an hour later they were purring up a pass, with the mountain sheep looking at them, and John playing with Denny's hair.

Golden days, and at night a moon—they slept at Dollar and Crianlarich, and by Sunday evening were at Mallaig, and the following Tuesday at Pitlochry. Here they

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He returned beaming and waving it in his hand.

"Gift from the gods," he said, "by way of a start," and since there was no possibility of tracing its owner, they agreed to divide it between them. They had lunched by the side of a Warwickshire stream on some sandwiches and fruit brought by Bert, and now this thirteen-and-fourpence—they had divided the pound into three—would pay for their dinner, and perhaps even for their bedroom. And so it did, in a pleasant little inn a mile or two out of Shrewsbury, where their bedroom smelt of lavender and the first roses, and in which they had both slept dreamlessly for ten hours. John had even whistled as he cleaned his safety razor, and they had breakfasted on fish and bacon and eggs, and now they were humming along at a leisurely pace towards the dales of Yorkshire and Westmorland.

They slept the second night in Kendal, and the next morning Bert disappeared, coming back about eleven o'clock, bubbling over with a fresh discovery. He had found a cottage, he said, in a neighbouring valley, where the woman would put them up for a couple of days, in the heart of the hills, and at a cost almost ridiculously inexpensive. Here they left the car in an adjacent farm stable, rambled and basked to their hearts' content, and for long hours met never a soul but an occasional fisherman, shepherd, or climber. John was already tanned, and Denny, so Bert told her, looking fifteen years younger, and when the bill came it was so diminutive that Denny and John thought there must have been a mistake.

The woman caught Bert's eye.

"No, that's all right," she explained. "Of course I couldn't do it, not in the

Bert's quick eye had seen something in the road. Pulling up the car, he went back and found that it was a stray one-pound note.

season. But just for two days like, it's another matter ; and I've put up some lunch for you in the car."

"Why, it's almost cheaper," laughed Denny, "than staying at home."

"Toss you who'll pay," said Bert, "for the lot," and since the sum was so small and the morning so divine, John agreed, and Bert produced a coin.

"Heads it's me," he said, "and tails you." And heads it was, and half an hour later they were purring up a pass, with the mountain sheep looking at them, and John playing with Denny's hair.

Golden days, and at night a moon—they slept at Dollar and Crianlarich, and by Sunday evening were at Mallaig, and the following Tuesday at Pitlochry. Here they

found letters from the children, and since Bert had insisted on doing himself proud, the bill for the first time was rather an alarming one, and once again he suggested that they should toss for it.

"Same as before," he said. "What? Heads it's me, tails it's you," and before they could protest the penny was in the air and down on the carpet with its head uppermost.

"But look here," said John.

"No, not a bit of it," said Bert. "It was my own idea and I've got to stand the racket."

And that was true, of course. If the penny had come down tails John would, in decency, have had to pay. So they left Pitlochry with the lightest of hearts—they were all three of them as brown as gipsies—and at Edinburgh, where they spent Thursday night, they found that Bert had been keeping a real surprise for them. For it appeared that he had done a good turn, in some remote past, to the proprietor of one of the chief hotels, who had given him a standing invitation to come and stay with him whenever he liked as a welcome guest.

"But that doesn't include us?" said John, as they presently drew up at a sort of palace in the neighbourhood of Prince's Street.

"Well, we'll see," said Bert. He went in to explore, and emerged grinning all over his face.

"Laid up with gout," he said, "at his sister's. But I've just been talking to him over the 'phone, and he says he'll never forgive us if we don't stop here and make ourselves as comfortable as we can."

The proprietor also, it appeared, had been talking over the 'phone, with the result that John and Denny had one of the state bedrooms, and found themselves feasted to such a dinner as neither of them had tasted for years. And afterwards, while Bert went to pay his respects to the absentee invalid, they sauntered together up the Castle Hill and wondered if they had ever lived at Harlesden.

"It's been like a miracle," said Denny.

"Best holiday we've had," said John, "and really it has cost us hardly anything, though of course there's the petrol. We must go shares in the petrol. I expect the bill for that will be pretty heavy."

"Oh, never mind," said Denny. "Think what we'll take back with us."

They looked down at the dreaming city.

VI.

AND John needn't have worried about the petrol. For when they reckoned up the cost of it at St. Albans, it appeared that the car had been amazingly economical, and Bert had once again insisted on tossing for it. With his usual bad luck, too, he had lost, though he had accepted it with the greatest good humour. And, really, apart from an occasional vulgarity, he had proved much more tolerable than they had dared to hope.

"And what I like about him," said John—they were watching him disappear round the corner of Ardingly Road—"is his simplicity and straightforwardness. There isn't an atom of guile about him."

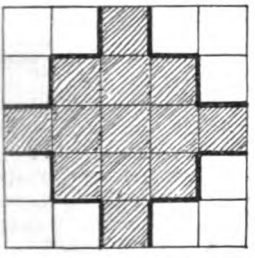
But when John was upstairs having a bath, and the last of the children had gone to bed, Denny closed the door and opened her purse and took out a penny and looked at it rather thoughtfully. For just as they had left St. Albans the engine had begun to knock a little, and while Bert and John were stooping over it a coin had slipped from one of Bert's pockets and trickled unperceived to her feet. She was about to return it when something had altered her mind. And now, as she stood looking at it, she remembered certain other things—a one-pound note found by chance in a remote and untravelled Shropshire lane, a cottage in Westmorland, and the invisible gentleman who had entertained them so royally in Edinburgh. It even made her ponder about the car itself and the modest hotel not far from Paddington. For the penny, if it could be called a penny, had a head on both sides of it.

PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

876.—CONDITIONAL MAGIC SQUARE.

THOUGH there is nothing new to be said about the mere construction of perfect magic squares, and the subject has a very large, though scattered, literature of its own, a little variation that has some fresh condition is generally welcome. Here is a not difficult example. Can you form a magic square with all the columns, rows, and two long diagonals adding up alike, with the numbers 1 to 25 inclusive, placing only the odd numbers on the shaded squares in our diagram and the even numbers in the other squares? There are a good many solutions. Can you find one of them?



877.—THE CONSPIRATORS' CODE.

A CORRESPONDENT (G.P.) sends me this interesting little puzzle. Two conspirators had a secret code. Their letters sometimes contained little arithmetical sums relating to some quite plausible discussion and having an entirely innocent appearance. But in their code each of the ten digits represented a different letter of the alphabet. Thus on one occasion there was a little sum in simple addition which, when the letters were substituted for the figures, read as follows:

```
  F L Y
  F O R
Y O U R
-------
L I F E
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It will be found an interesting puzzle to reconstruct the addition sum with the help of the clue that I and O stand for the figures 1 and 0 respectively.

878.—BOXES OF CORDITE.

CORDITE charges (writes W. H.-J.) for six-inch howitzers were served out from the ammunition dump in boxes of 15, 18, and 20.

"Why the three different sizes of boxes?" I asked the officer on the dump. He answered: "So that we can give any battery the number of charges it needs without breaking a box." This was an excellent system for the delivery of a large number of boxes, but failed in small cases, like 5, 10, 25, and 61. Now what is the biggest number of charges that cannot be served out in whole boxes of 15, 18, and 20? It is not a very large number.

879.—TWO MORE QUEER WORDS.

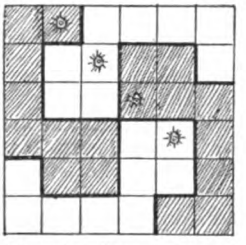
READERS may remember my puzzle No. 551, "Two Queer Words" (May, 1921), in which a happy pair were UNITED and, by a mere transposition of the two central letters, they became divorced—that is, UNTIED. Here is another puzzle of exactly the same kind. You merely make the two central letters of another six-letter word change positions, when the second word is formed.

My *first* is accidental, and
You'll find it if you try.
My *second* will, beyond a doubt,
Express the reason why.

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

871.—THE GRAND LAMA'S PROBLEM.

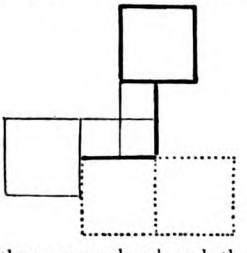
THE illustration shows how the four jewels may be set in accordance with the conditions. By "elsewhere" was meant that all the squares occupied must



be different, otherwise there is an easy solution in a column or row if one of the two central jewels be unmoved.

872.—NEW MATCH PUZZLE.

IN the illustration the dotted lines indicate the six matches that have been removed. The thin lines



show where they are replaced and the thick lines indicate the six that have not been moved.

873.—MISSING WORDS.

THE words in their order are as follows: A priest; sea-trip; pier, sat; a stripe; tips are; Parties; pate, sir; air-pest; rise pat; spare it; past ire; is apter; a pet, sir; I prates; as tripe; repast, I; traipse; praties.

874.—EQUAL FRACTIONS.

MY five answers are as follows: $2/4 = 3/6 = 79/158$; $3/6 = 7/14 = 29/58$; $3/6 = 9/18 = 27/54$; $2/6 = 3/9 = 58/174$; $\frac{2}{1} = \frac{6}{3} = \frac{97}{485}$

875.—AN ENIGMA.

THE answer is LOVE. (Two 25's equal L, and E is one of the five letters in the word EIGHT.)

"Haunted!"

By

WILLIAM FREEMAN

Illustrated by
A. T. SMITH

PETER FRASER escaped from the shining spotlessness of the dining-room into the shining spotlessness of the hall, and from there, annexing his hat and stick *en route*, into the most immaculate front garden in St. Cecilia's Avenue. His ears were tingling, his eyes hot and smarting. Janet again. This time the subject under discussion had been the effect of muddied boots on lately-washed linoleum.

At least, it hadn't so much been a discussion as a castigation. Janet was Peter's elder sister. She had been the guardian of his youth; now, when he was approaching forty, her rule was more adamant than ever. And there was no respite, for Peter had just too much money and just too little ambition to impel him to work for his living. A certain amount of book-collecting—but only a limited amount, because books harbour dust—and gardening were the most he achieved in the way of hobbies. There were times when he realized, with rather dreadful clarity, that he wasn't making much of his life.

But this afternoon, at any rate, freedom was his, for Janet would be spending the next eight or nine hours with a friend. On the spur of the moment he climbed on a City-going bus. Beyond a vague intention of visiting the second-hand bookshops in Charing Cross Road, he had no definite plans; but the pleasant autumn air was in itself both a tonic and a sedative.

He unfolded the paper he had bought. There wasn't much news. A paragraph about a haunted house in Bayswater caught his eye. All sorts of grisly and ghastly manifestations had taken place, but the family were sticking it. Oddly enough, the subject before Janet had opened fire about muddy boots and linoleum had been ghosts. Peter had said he'd rather like to live in a haunted house.

Janet had sniffed contemptuously.

"You'd never *dare!*"

"I would," said Peter.

"Then you'd live there alone," said Janet. "Blasphemous wickedness, I call it, wanting to meet people of such a class!"

Peter's mind reverted to that. Why shouldn't he take up the challenge? Why shouldn't he prove that he wasn't entirely invertebrate? What if Janet did refuse to join him? A chink in his prison had revealed itself. His resolution to escape hardened. The second-hand bookshops in Charing Cross Road must wait. His more immediate need was a house-agent.

He found one—Messrs. Wetherley, Briggs and Co. The firm's offices looked sufficiently important and old-established to be able to meet his requirements. He went in, and to the clerk who came forward said simply, "Have you any haunted houses on your books?"

The clerk was young. But he was trained in the Wetherley and Briggs tradition, which refuses to admit either ignorance or inadequacy. He said, "To purchase or to rent, sir?"

"Either," said Peter.

This was awkward. But the clerk rallied gamely.

"With or without a billiard-room, sir?"

"Either," said Peter again. "I'm no player myself," he added, "but I wouldn't mind watching a couple of ghosts knocking the balls about."

The clerk, rallying once more, was beginning, "With or without central heating?" when chance brought the junior partner on the scene.

"What's all this?" he snapped.

Peter and the clerk embarked upon simultaneous explanations.

The junior partner glanced at Peter appraisingly.

"Fetch Folio sixty-seven," he commanded. "There's a house at Wimblesham that might suit."

The clerk brought a leather-bound volume

"Have you any haunted houses on your books?"

weighing about thirty pounds. Supervised by Mr. Briggs, he turned up the house at Wimblesham and jotted down particulars. These, unabridged and stated in ordinary, as distinct from house-agent's, English, were interesting.

The house was just over a hundred years old. It had ten rooms and two acres of garden, and was three miles from the nearest station, which was Felpsted. Concerning the ghost itself:—

"As far as I can recollect," said the junior partner, "the owner told us that she was quite friendly and harmless. Yes, a female. Made away with herself somewhere about 1850. Got all hot and bothered because a favourite brother went to sea and never came back. Does a sort of patrol down the stairs and out through the reception-rooms into the garden, looking for him. No harm to anybody on the way, you understand. The owner wants to get rid of the place because his wife won't live out of London. He's asking twelve hundred, but I wouldn't be surprised if he'd accept a thousand. It's a dead bargain, in any case. If you'd care to run down, we can give you the keys. An order to view won't be any use, as the place is unoccupied."

Peter did care. A house like that seemed almost too good to be real; as though it not only possessed a ghost, but was itself a wraith. With the key in his pocket he took a taxi from the office to Waterloo, and was lucky in having only ten minutes to wait for a train to Felpsted. At intervals he thought of Janet, and wondered how she'd take the news.

Felpsted is small, sedate, and extremely rural. The station-master, who took Peter's ticket, told him the way to Wimblesham.

"It's a bit twisty," he said. "Strangers get lost pretty often. I remember an artist-chap who came down two summers ago——"

Peter was still listening to the story of the artist-chap when a stout elderly man appeared.

"Here's Alf Fox," said the station-master, "and that motor-wagon of his lives four mile beyond Wimblesham. If you want a lift, Alf's the lad."

Peter was entirely agreeable. He was introduced to Alf and the wagon. It was a curious vehicle, belonging, from the motorist's point of view, to a far remoter age than its owner. It stood very high on spindly wheels, and appeared to have been patched and strengthened extensively with fragments of packing-cases, petrol tins, and string.

"But she *goes*," volunteered Mr. Fox, as one experienced in combating criticism, "and to-day's one of 'er good days. Not 'alf make yer teeth rattle, she won't!"

"Shook out Miss Evans's teeth, didn't she?" said the station-master.

Alf nodded. "Yes, but they wasn't 'er own."

Peter, wondering vaguely whose teeth

they were, climbed into the vehicle. The cargo on the body of the car was extremely miscellaneous, dusty and oily, and Alf indicated the seat beside his own. After cranking up, they started. The wagon did five hundred yards at a speed which convulsed its entire mechanism, and then stopped dead.

"What d'yer think o' that?" demanded Mr. Fox, triumphantly.

"It's extraordinary," said Peter.

"Wouldn't 'a' thought the ole gal 'ad it in 'er, would yer?"

"I wouldn't," said Peter.

"I took the Felpsted Town Band out in 'er last summer. Won a prize, they did, a-playin' 'The Entry o' the Alligators.' The judges says, they says——"

"When are we going on?" hinted Peter.

"When she's cooled off a bit, mister. Not in any partickler 'urry, are yer?"

"No, but we're blocking the High Street, aren't we?"

"What do I pay rates for, anyway? 'Ello, Bert!"

Bert was what in bygone days would have been termed a horny-handed son of toil. He wore corduroy trousers and massively hobnailed boots, and carried a basin tied up in a red-and-white cotton handkerchief, and a tin can.

"G-g-g-got a l-l-lift to offer a f-f-feller?" he inquired.

"Climb up," said Alf. He turned to Peter. "Stutters," he said, confidentially.

"B-b-b-been like it ever sin' I f-f-fell off a threshing m-m-m-m-machine," Bert explained.

"That's right," said Alf. "*Stutters*. Can't talk as good as me and you can. Got a nimplement in 'is throat."

Bert climbed into the car, which, once more cranked up, duly started.

This time its journey was shorter, but its eccentricities, which included two attempts to mount the kerb, more marked. A stout woman whose name was Emma Voal, and her offspring, a snub-nosed, wide-eyed little boy, added themselves to the passenger-list.

AT the third stop, beyond the confines of the town, Mr. Chirk, an aged man with a beard that suggested a bedraggled Santa Claus left over from the previous season, joined the party.

"Makin' 'alf-a-dozen of us altogether," said Alf, becoming the genial host. "Six. Twice as many as there was 'fore I met Emma, but all goin' further than what you are. This 'ere gent," he added, indicating Peter, "wants Wimblesham 'Ouse."

Peter became the immediate focus of eight eyes.

"*Why* does 'e wornt it?" asked Master Voal.

"I'm thinking of buying it," said Peter. Why make a secret of the reason of his visit?

"Yes, but——"

"Them as asks questions gets struck dead with thunderbolts in their stummicks," said his mother. "The gent's buying it because 'e's got the money, which, barrin' the penny I give you this morning, you ain't."

"I suppose," said Peter, "none of you happen to have seen the ghost?"

There was a moment's dead silence, and then Mr. Chirk spoke for the first time.

"Billy or Nanny?" he inquired, huskily.

"Whatjer t-t-talking a-bub-bub-boot?" demanded Bert.

"Goats," said the aged one. "Wot *'e* was talkin' about."

Four people immediately bellowed enlightenment.

"'E's deaf," said Alf confidentially to Peter. "Drum of 'is ear busted. That's why 'e ought to 'ave a trumpet. Deaf as a post."

"I thought we was talkin' 'bout ghosts," protested Mr. Chirk.

"We was," said Emma. "But I ain't never seen none. Mind you, there's *noises*."

At which moment the vehicle, ignoring Alf's steering, swooped to the left, collided end-on with a fallen elm-trunk outside the Wimblesham smithy, ran backwards a yard or so, and came to a jangling stop.

"Reckon you'd better all get down," said Alf, after a brief examination. "She's done 'er bit for to-day. After all, she's brought us nigh on three mile. There ain't many cars in Felpsted as gets along the same as she do."

Peter agreed. Travelling for the last ten minutes had suggested an Alpine journey on the back of a hiccuping camel. Every joint ached.

"From 'ere to the 'ouse," continued Alf, pointing, "ain't more'n a quarter of a mile. You can see the chimbleys through the trees."

Peter saw them.

"D-d-dessay 'e'd be g-g-glad o' someone to show 'im the way, and k-k-keep 'is 'eart up?" hinted Bert.

"It isn't really necessary," said Peter, hastily. "The ghost doesn't appear in daylight, and there's still an hour or so left."

"But it's *there* just the same," said Alf. "And I'll 'ave to leave the car 'ere for a bit, to be over'auled."

"Me and Sam might come too," said Emma Voal. "Sam's a reg'lar district visitor for poking 'is nose into other people's 'ouses."

Peter sighed, but submitted. Protest

At the third stop an aged man, with a beard that suggested a bedraggled Santa Claus left over from the previous season, joined the party.

wouldn't have been worth while. Hints would have no more effect on these people than on a hippopotamus. Life at Wimblesham offered few diversions, and they made the most of what came along. Probably the local piano-organ had just achieved "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay," and the only possessor of a gramophone was the Squire. Let them come—all the way!

He and Alf, by an instinctive sense of etiquette, headed the procession. Behind them were Mrs. Voal and her son; behind them, in turn, Bert and Mr. Chirk. Peter tried to imagine a conversation between these two, but his imagination refused the job. An extra escort was provided by one or two other people, local inhabitants who asked questions of one another, but for some odd psychological reason fought shy of asking Peter himself.

They trailed along the main road, and into a lane that ended in a pair of high iron gates. These were chained and padlocked, but a smaller gate in the wall at the side was unfastened. They filed through, past a silent lodge and up a long weedy drive to the house.

It was more imposing than Peter had imagined. Wetherley and Briggs's junior partner hadn't exaggerated when he had called it a dead bargain for the money.

A terrace, with a stone balustrade, ran along the front. Peter went up the main entrance and took the key from his pocket. A glance was enough to show him that it didn't belong. Either Wetherleys had made

a mistake or he had come to the wrong door.

"Don't 'e fit?" asked Alf, watching him.

"No," said Peter.

"Key ain't the right size," said Alf, addressing the procession. "It ain't fret-worked in the right places, so to speak. It don't *fit*."

Mr. Chirk, rousing himself from a sort of trance, said, "I'd a uncle as used to 'ave 'em. Knocked most of 'is front teeth out once, 'e did."

"B-b-better try the b-b-b-back," suggested Bert to Peter.

Peter, followed by his allies, wandered round to the rear of the house. There were several doors there, but they all refused to admit Messrs. Wetherley's key.

"This," said Peter, after a final attempt on what appeared to be the entrance to the scullery, "is—annoying!"

"Silly, that's what *I* calls it," volunteered Master Voal unexpectedly, "'anging about outside when——"

"When what?" said Peter.

"When a smart chap could wriggle in through a window and open the door from the other side."

"By a 'smart chap,' meaning——"

"Me," said Sam, with simple dignity.

"Meanin' nothin' o' the kind," snapped his mother. "Climb up and open a winder you do *not*, me lord!"

"Couldn't he do it for half a crown?" said Peter.

"Not under five shillings, sir."

"An' me to keep the money," added Master Voal.

His mother reluctantly gave way. He climbed on to a sill, produced a broken-bladed knife, snicked back the catch, pushed up the sash, and disappeared.

The party went round to the front of the house again, and found a flushed and triumphing Sam already awaiting them by the open door.

"I reckon 'e deserves 'is money," said Alf, heartily.

"A 'ard-earned seven-and-six, that's what I calls it," said the hero's mother.

"Five shillings," said Peter.

"That," said Mrs. Voal, "didn't make no allowance for damage to 'is clothes. A reely liberal gent would pay more."

"*And* st-t-tand d-d-drinks all round," added Bert.

Peter, perceiving that largess was expected of him, distributed shillings, as well as the seven-and-sixpence.

"And now," he said, "I'll say good night to you all."

"No need to do that, young man," said Mr. Chirk, with offended dignity. "Ten's my bed-time. Sometimes it's nigh 'leven."

"You'll want to get back to Felpsted, surely?" said Alf. "Well, what's the matter with that there car o' mine?"

"Heaven knows!" said Peter, and then, hastily: "The fact is, I'd sooner walk. I want to explore the place at my leisure."

"All right," said Alf. "Want to go over it without bein' 'urried like. All *right*. But you ain't paid me yet for bringin' you 'ere."

Peter's hand slid back into his pocket. "How much is it?"

"I should be cheatin' meself if I asked you less than six bob," said Alf.

"But that's more than the cost of a taxi!"

"There ain't any taxis in Felpsted. 'Sides, you can't compare my wagon to a ornery public vehicle."

"True," agreed Peter, bitterly.

He paid. Further argument would have been a waste of time, and he hadn't any time to waste. Alf and Co. departed. They went reluctantly, rather like an audience compelled to miss the last act, but they did go, leaving Peter alone in the haunted house.

THERE appeared to be a good deal of furniture still stacked in the shadowy, dusty rooms on the ground floor. These opened into a square hall; whence the staircase led up to an old-fashioned gallery. Peter wandered in the deepening dusk from room to room with a growing feeling of proprietorship. Haunted? All right—who cared? And then, looking up, he suddenly caught sight of the ghost, standing, white and rigid, at the top of the stairs, and his heart behaved like a lift which has got out of control. He couldn't distinguish anything more than the fact that she was wearing a pale trailing garment. She paused, and then glided towards the top of the stairs and began to descend. Peter shrank into a patch of shadow. His heart, after that first downward swoop, had begun to thud madly.

The ghost, one white hand just touching the balustrade, reached the hall, paused, and then moved into the drawing-room. Peter, after several palpitating seconds of indecision, followed. She opened the shuttered windows, and then stepped out on to the terrace.

Peter continued to follow.

From the terrace she moved to the lawn, from the lawn to an orchard beyond, from there, by a moss-grown and circuitous path, to a block of outbuildings. A door there was open. Through this she disappeared.

Peter decided to see the thing through to the end. But he paused a little before actually entering that black doorway. He had told Janet that he wasn't afraid of

ghosts, and it was perfectly true. The real reason he hesitated was that somehow it didn't seem quite cricket to chase an unhappy spectre into a building from which, so far as he could see in an extremely poor light, she could only evade him by the exercise of her supernatural powers. He assumed the place to be a harness-room or some sort of annex to the stables. . . .

A hand — he could feel the clenched knuckles against the nape of his neck—swooped down and gripped his collar, half strangling him, and making his legs sag helplessly. He was whirled round, and out into the garden again.

"Hands up!" roared the knuckle-owner.

Peter obeyed mechanically. The knuckles released their grip. A massive middle-aged man with a prize-fighter's jaw confronted him.

"What's the game, my lad?"

"I—I was just going through the door——"

A hand swooped down and gripped his collar, half strangling him.

"I guessed that. And I'm just going through your pockets. It's all right, my dear. Just keep your eye on him."

The ghost reappeared. But now, even to Peter's bedazed senses, it was obvious that it wasn't a ghost, but a crinkly-haired, grey-eyed girl of about twenty-five, wearing a wrap of some soft pale material.

The square-chinned man searched his prisoner's pockets with immense gusto and thoroughness.

"A rotten haul," he admitted, regretfully. "But then, you're a rotten burglar."

"There's some misunderstanding——"

"'Miscalculation' would be a better word. You thought the place was empty, didn't you?"

"Certainly. My name is Peter Fraser."

"Indeed? Mine's Major Barlow."

"And I came from Wetherley and Briggs, the house-agents."

"Got any proof of that statement?"

Peter produced the key. The major examined it.

"That fits nothing here."

"I know. They gave me the wrong one. None of the doors would open."

The Major gave a short harsh laugh.

"You'll find the same inconvenience at the local police cell. *And* at Portland. In the meantime, I'm going to lock you in here, and then go to look for a policeman. You'll stay behind and see he doesn't get away, Barbara."

"I—I'd rather not, uncle."

"I sha'n't be gone five minutes. It'll take a good deal longer than that for him to break the lock."

Peter was thrust back into captivity. The door slammed. Through it he could hear the Major giving final instructions, and the sound of his retreating footsteps. Even by the glimmer of light which still filtered in through the high cobwebby windows he could see he hadn't the remotest chance of breaking out.

A voice spoke.

"Mr. Fraser."

"Yes?"

"If there's anything more you'd care

to explain before Uncle Robert comes back——"

Peter's heart performed further athletic exercises.

"It isn't easy, through a solid oak door."

Pause.

"Will you give me your word of honour not to run away if I open it?"

"Of course."

Once more the key turned, and Peter and the crinkly-haired girl found themselves face to face.

"Well?" she said.

"All I've told you is perfectly true. I came down from town to buy a haunted house. The agents told me that this one was haunted. A man named Alf Fox brought me from Felpsted station in his wagon——"

"Can you describe the wagon?"

Peter did his best. As a word picture it was quite a creditable attempt.

"That sounds convincing. Had you any fellow-passengers?"

Peter tried again.

The girl nodded understandingly. "But I can't understand how the rumour got about that we'd a ghost at Wimblesham Magna."

"Wimblesham *Magna?*"

"Yes."

Peter's hand groped at the wall for support.

"I wonder," she continued, "if by any chance you're mixing us up with Wimblesham Parva, on the other side of the hill, two miles away?"

Peter's face answered the question.

"There's an awful dilapidated place there, with a pond in which they say a girl drowned herself because a favourite brother didn't come home from sea when she was expecting him."

"But—but what's *this* house?" Peter's voice was a croak.

"One that used to belong to my grandfather. He died in the spring. Uncle Robert and I—he's the only relation I have—came home from India to live here yesterday. I was unpacking some things in one of the attic rooms when I thought I heard someone below. I happened to have this shawl in my hand, and I flung it over me and hurried down. And then I saw you, and thought you were a burglar, and ran out to where Uncle Robert was pottering about, and told him."

"My hat, what a muddle! And until I've convinced him that he's been barking up the wrong tree——"

"You never will convince him. He's a darling when you really know him, but terrifically obstinate."

"Bulldog breed, and all that sort of tosh?"

"Yes. And he may be back now at any minute. The best thing you can do is just to slip away, and leave all the explaining to me."

"But it's letting you down so abominably."

"It isn't. I know uncle, and you don't. And listen. When it's all cleared up, and he's roared with laughter over the whole business, he'll tell me to invite you down on a visit."

"I can't believe it."

"Then wait and see." She held out her hand. "Good-bye."

"Good-bye," said Peter.

IT was just thirty-six hours later. Peter—the same down-trodden Peter—was breakfasting with Janet—the same domineering Janet.

"*Some* day," Janet was saying, acidly, "you may be good enough to tell me how and where you spent Tuesday afternoon."

"I've already told you I went into the country, to a village where——"

"Where neither of us knows a soul, which hasn't even a railway-station, and which neither of us had ever heard of! Weak and foolish I have always known you, Peter, but never should I have believed you so stupidly untruthful——"

"You're doing me a gross injustice, Janet."

"If and when that is proved, I shall apologize. I shall also consider it my duty to find a less humiliating environment at the earliest opportunity. . . . Yes, Ellen?"

"A letter, ma'am."

"For me?"

"For Mr. Peter, ma'am."

Peter, as he received it, saw that the envelope bore the Wimblesham Magna postmark.

A. VACHELL STACY AUMONIER
VERE STACPOOLE COSMO HAMILTON

NOV 3 1927

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

"THE MARACOT DEEP"
A Thrilling Adventure Story
By
A. CONAN DOYLE

THE LOST WORLD UNDER THE SEA

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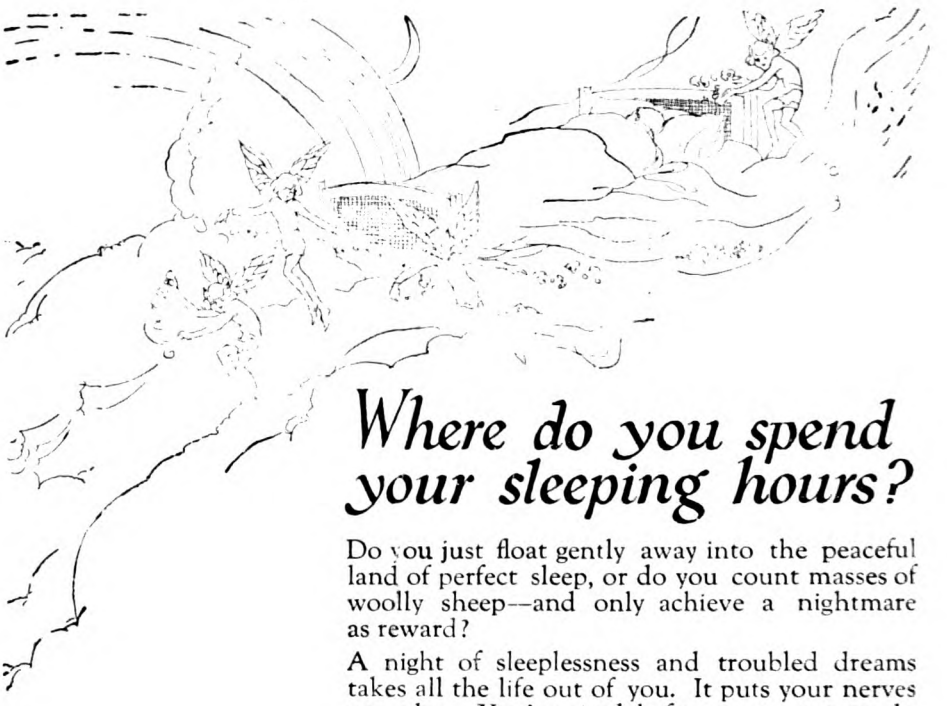

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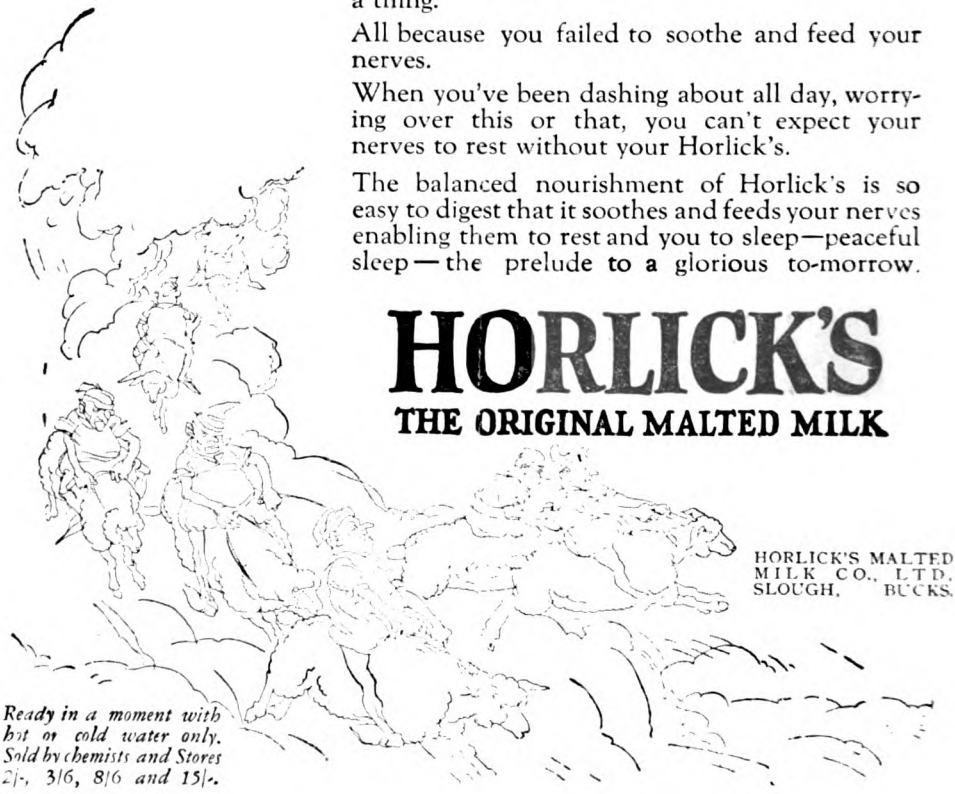

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THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for November, 1927.

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Frontispiece: "The creature's head and its great nippers were at work above us and we still swayed like a clanging bell. The strength of the beast must have been enormous."

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The characters and names in the stories in "The Strand Magazine" are entirely imaginary and have no reference to real persons.

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To face back of Frontispiece.

NOVEMBER, 1927.

THE CREATURE'S HEAD AND ITS GREAT NIPPERS WERE AT WORK ABOVE US AND WE STILL SWAYED LIKE A CLANGING BELL. THE STRENGTH OF THE BEAST MUST HAVE BEEN ENORMOUS.

(See page 430.)

The MARACOT DEEP:

The Lost World under the Sea

By

A. CONAN DOYLE

Illustrated by
TOM PEDDIE

SYNOPSIS OF THE FIRST INSTALMENT.

Professor Maracot, the famous scientist, organized an expedition for studying deep-sea life, and with two assistants—Cyrus Headley, an Oxford Rhodes scholar, and Bill Scanlan, a mechanic—he sailed from England for some unknown destination. Shortly afterwards, in a letter written from the Canary Islands, Headley described how Professor Maracot had astonished his companions by announcing that on board was a steel cage, with crystal windows, in which they were to be lowered to the bed of the ocean. Nearly a year of silence followed this letter and the expedition was regarded as lost, when news of Professor Maracot was received in an extraordinary manner. The captain of a tramp steamer reported the finding of a silvery globe or ball floating in the water, which contained a further message from Cyrus Headley. This stated that the Professor's plan had succeeded and that the cage with its three occupants was then resting at the bottom of the Atlantic!

II.

FOR a time I think that we all had the same feeling. We did not want to do anything or to see anything. We just wanted to sit quiet and try to realize the wonder of it—that we should be resting in the plumb centre of one of the great oceans of the world. But soon the strange scene round us, illuminated in all directions by our lights, drew us to the windows.

We had settled upon a bed of high algæ ("Cutleria multifida," said Maracot), the yellow fronds of which waved around us, moved by some deep-sea current exactly as branches would move in a summer breeze. They were not long enough to obscure our view, though their great flat leaves, deep golden in the light, flowed occasionally across our vision. Beyond them lay slopes of some blackish slag-like material which were dotted with lovely coloured creatures, holothurians, ascidians, echini, and echinoderms, as thickly as ever an English springtime bank was sprinkled with hyacinth and primroses. These living flowers of the sea, vivid scarlet, rich purple, and delicate pink, were spread in profusion upon that coal-black background. Here and there great sponges bristled out from the crevices of the dark rocks, and a few fish of the middle depths, themselves showing up as flashes of colour, shot across our circle of vivid radiance. We were gazing enraptured at the fairy scene when an anxious voice came down the tube:—

"Well, how do you like the bottom? Is all well with you? Don't be too long, for the glass is dropping and I don't like the look of it. Giving you air enough? Anything more we can do?"

"All right, Captain!" cried Maracot, cheerily. "We won't be long. You are nursing us well. We are quite as comfortable as in our own cabin. Stand by presently to move us slowly forwards."

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WE had come into the region of the luminous fishes, and it amused us to turn out our own lights, and in the absolute pitch-darkness—a darkness in which a sensitive plate can be suspended for an hour without a trace even of the ultra-violet ray—to look out at the phosphorescent activity of the ocean. As against a black velvet curtain one saw little points of brilliant light moving steadily along as a liner at night might shed light through its long line of portholes. One terrifying creature had luminous teeth which gnashed in Biblical fashion in the outer darkness. Another had long golden antennæ, and yet another a plume of flame above its head. As far as our vision carried, brilliant points flashed in the darkness, each little being bent upon its own business, and lighting up its own course as surely as the nightly taxicabs at the theatre-hour in the Strand. Soon we had our own lights up again and the Doctor was making his observations of the sea-bottom.

"Deep as we are, we are not deep enough to get any of the characteristic Bathic deposits," said he. "These are entirely beyond our possible range. Perhaps on another occasion with a longer hawser——"

"Cut it out!" growled Bill. "Forget it!"

Maracot smiled. "You will soon get acclimatized to the depths, Scanlan. This will not be our only descent."

"The Hell you say!" muttered Bill.

"You will think no more of it than of going down into the hold of the *Stratford*. You will observe, Mr. Headley, that the groundwork here, so far as we can observe it through the dense growth of hydrozoa and silicious sponges, is pumicestone and the black slag of basalt, pointing to ancient plutonic activities. Indeed, I am inclined to think that it confirms my previous view that this ridge is part of a volcanic formation and that the Maracot Deep," he rolled out the words as if he loved them, "represents the outer slope of the mountain. It has struck me that it would be an interesting experiment to move our cage slowly onwards until we come to the edge of the Deep, and see exactly what the formation may be at that point. I should expect to find a precipice of majestic dimensions extending downwards at a sharp angle into the extreme depths of the ocean."

The experiment seemed to me to be a dangerous one, for who could say how far our thin hawser could bear the strain of lateral movement; but with Maracot danger, either to himself or to anyone else, simply did not exist when a scientific observation had to be made. I held my breath, and so I observed did Bill Scanlan, when a slow movement of our steel shell, brushing aside the waving fronds of seaweed, showed that the full strain was upon the line. It stood it nobly, however, and with a very gentle sweeping progression we began to glide over the bottom of the ocean, Maracot, with a compass in the hollow of his hand, shouting his direction as to the course to follow, and occasionally ordering the shell to be raised so as to avoid some obstacle in our path.

"This basaltic ridge can hardly be more than a mile across," he explained. "I had marked the abyss as being to the west of the point where we took our plunge. At this rate, we should certainly reach it in a very short time."

We slid without any check over the volcanic plain, all feathered by the waving golden algæ and made beautiful by the gorgeous jewels of Nature's cutting, flaming out from their setting of jet. Suddenly the Doctor dashed to the telephone.

"Stop her!" he cried. "We are there!"

A MONSTROUS gap had opened suddenly before us. It was a fearsome place, like a vision of a nightmare. Black shining cliffs of basalt fell sheer down into the unknown. Their edges were fringed with dangling laminaria as ferns might overhang some earthly gorge, but beneath that tossing, vibrating rim there were only the black gleaming walls of the chasm. The rocky edge curved away from us, but the abyss might be of any breadth, for our lights failed to penetrate the gloom which lay before us. When a Lucas signalling lamp was turned downwards it shot out a long golden lane of parallel beams extending down, down, down until it was quenched in the gloom of the terrible chasm beneath us.

"It is indeed wonderful!" cried Maracot, gazing out with a pleased proprietary expression upon his thin, eager face. "For depth I need not say that it has often been exceeded. There is the Challenger Deep of twenty-six thousand feet near the Ladrone Islands, the Planet Deep of thirty-two thousand feet off the Philippines, and many others, but it is probable that the Maracot Deep stands alone in the declivity of its descent, and is remarkable also for its escape from the observation of so many hydrographic explorers who have charted the Atlantic. It can hardly be doubted——"

He had stopped in the middle of a sentence and a look of intense interest and surprise had frozen upon his face. Bill Scanlan and I, gazing over his shoulders, were petrified by that which met our startled eyes.

Some great creature was coming up the tunnel of light which we had projected into

the abyss. Far down where it tailed off into the darkness of the pit we could dimly see the vague black lurchings and heavings of some monstrous body in slow upward progression. Paddling in clumsy fashion it was rising with dim flickerings to the edge of the gulf. Now, as it came nearer, it was right in the beam, and we could see its dreadful form more clearly. It was a beast unknown to Science, and yet with an analogy to much with which we are familiar. Too long for a huge crab and too short for a giant lobster, it was moulded more upon the lines of the crayfish, with two monstrous nippers outstretched on either side, and a pair of sixteen-foot antennæ which quivered in front of its black dull sullen eyes. The carapace, light yellow in colour, may have been ten feet across, and its total length apart from the antennæ must have been not less than thirty.

Suddenly the Doctor dashed to the telephone. "Stop her!" he cried. "We are there!"

"Wonderful!" cried Maracot, scribbling desperately in his notebook. "Semi-pediculated eyes, elastic lamellæ, family crustaceæ, species unknown. Crustaceus Maracoti—why not? Why not?"

"By gosh, I'll pass its name, but it seems to me it's coming our way!" cried Bill. "Say, Doc, what about putting our light out?"

"Just one moment while I note the reticulations!" cried the naturalist. "Yes, yes, that will do." He clicked off the switch and we were back in our inky darkness with only the darting lights outside like meteors on a moonless night.

"That beast is sure the world's worst," said Bill, wiping his forehead. "I felt like the morning after a bottle of Prohibition Hoosh."

"It is certainly terrible to look at," Maracot remarked, "and perhaps terrible to deal with also if we were really exposed to those monstrous claws. But inside our steel case we can afford to examine him in safety and at our ease."

He had hardly spoken when there came a rap as from a pickaxe upon our outer wall. Then there was a long-drawn rasping and scratching, ending in another sharp rap.

"Say, he wants to come in!" cried Bill Scanlan in alarm. "By gosh! we want 'No Admission' painted on this shack." His shaking voice showed how forced was his merriment, and I confess that my own knees

were knocking together as I was aware of the stealthy monster closing up with an even blacker darkness each of our windows in succession, as he explored this strange shell which, could he but crack it, might contain his food.

"He can't hurt us," said Maracot, but there was less assurance in his tone. "Maybe it would be as well to shake the brute off." He hailed the Captain up the tube.

"Pull us up twenty or thirty feet," he cried.

A few seconds later we rose from the lava plain and swung gently in the still water. But the terrible beast was pertinacious. After a very short interval we heard once more the raspings of his feelers and the sharp tappings of his claws as he felt us round. It was terrible to sit silently in the dark and know that death was so near. If that mighty claw fell upon the window, would it stand the strain? That was the unspoken question in each of our minds.

But suddenly an unexpected and more urgent danger presented itself. The tappings had gone to the roof of our little dwelling, and now we began to sway with a rhythmic movement to and fro.

"Good God!" I cried. "It has hold of the hawser. It will surely snap it."

"Say, Doc, it's mine for the surface. I guess we've seen what we came to see, and it's home, sweet home for Bill Scanlan. Ring up the elevator and get her going."

"But our work is not half done," croaked Maracot. "We have only begun to explore the edges of the Deep. Let us at least see how broad it is. When we have reached the other side I shall be content to return." Then up the tube: "All well, Captain. Move on at two knots until I call for a stop."

We moved slowly out over the edge of the abyss. Since darkness had not saved us from attack we now turned on our lights. One of the portholes was entirely obscured by what appeared to be the creature's lower stomach. Its head and its great nippers were at work above us and we still swayed like a clanging bell. The strength of the beast must have been enormous. Were ever mortals placed in such a situation, with five miles of water beneath—and that deadly monster above? The oscillations became more and more violent. An excited shout came down the tube from the Captain as he became aware of the jerks upon the hawser, and Maracot sprang to his feet with his hands thrown upwards in despair. Even within the shell we were aware of the jar of the broken wires, and an instant later we were falling into the mighty gulf beneath us.

As I look back at that awful moment I can remember hearing a wild cry from Maracot.

"The hawser has parted! You can do nothing! We are all dead men!" he yelled, grabbing at the telephone tube, and then, "Good-bye, Captain, good-bye to all." They were our last words to the world of men.

WE did not fall swiftly down, as you might have imagined. In spite of our weight, our hollow shell gave us some sustaining buoyancy, and we sank slowly and gently into the abyss. I heard the long scrape as we slid through the claws of the horrible creature who had been our ruin, and then with a smooth gyration we went circling downwards into the abysmal depths. It may have been fully five minutes, and it seemed like an hour, before we reached the limit of our telephone wire and snapped it like a thread. Our air tube broke off at almost the same moment and the salt water came spouting through the vents. With quick, deft hands Bill Scanlan tied cords round each of the rubber tubes and so stopped the inrush, while the Doctor released the top of our compressed air which came hissing forth from the tubes. The lights had gone out when the wire snapped, but even in the dark the Doctor was able to connect up the Hellesens dry cells which lit a number of lamps in the roof.

"It should last us a week," he said, with a wry smile. "We shall at least have light to die in." Then he shook his head sadly and a kindly smile came over his gaunt features. "It is all right for me. I am an old man and have done my work in the world. My one regret is that I should have allowed you two young fellows to come with me. I should have taken the risk alone."

I simply shook his hand in reassurance, for indeed there was nothing I could say. Bill Scanlan, too, was silent. Slowly we sank, marking our pace by the dark fish shadows which flitted past our windows. It seemed as if they were flying upwards rather than that we were sinking down. We still oscillated, and there was nothing so far as I could see to prevent us from falling on our side, or even turning upside down. Our weight, however, was, fortunately, very evenly balanced and we kept a level floor. Glancing up at the bathymeter, I saw that we had already reached the depth of a mile.

"You see, it is as I said," remarked Maracot, with some complacency. "You may have seen my paper in the Proceedings of the Oceanographical Society upon the relation of pressure and depth. I wish I could get one word back to the world, if only to confute Bulow of Giessen, who ventured to contradict me."

"My gosh! If I could get a word back to the world I wouldn't waste it on a square-

The three of us sat patiently on the settee, gripping the edges of it with strained fingers

head highbrow," said the mechanic. " There is a little wren in Philadelphia that will have tears in her pretty eyes when she hears that Bill Scanlan has passed out. Well, it sure does seem a dumm queer way of doing it, anyhow."

" You should never have come," I said, putting my hand on his.

" What sort of tin-horn sport should I have been if I had quitted ? " he answered. " No, it's my job, and I am glad I stuck it."

" How long have we ? " I asked the Doctor, after a pause.

He shrugged his shoulders.

" We shall have time to see the real bottom of the ocean, anyhow," said he. " There is air enough in our tubes for the best part of a day. Our trouble is with the waste products. That is what is going to choke us. If we could get rid of our carbon dioxide——"

" That I can see is impossible."

" There is one tube of pure oxygen. I put it in in case of accidents. A little of that from time to time will help to keep us alive. You will observe that we are now more than two miles deep."

" Why should we try to keep ourselves alive ? The sooner it is over the better," said I.

" That's the dope," cried Scanlan. " Cut loose and have done with it."

" And miss the most wonderful sight that man's eye has ever seen ! " said Maracot. " It would be treason to Science. Let us record facts to the end, even if they should be for ever buried with our bodies. Play the game out."

" Some sport, the Doc ! " cried Scanlan. " I guess he has the best guts of the bunch. Let us see the spiel to an end."

We sat patiently on the settee, the three of us, gripping the edges of it with strained fingers as it swayed and rocked, while the fishes still flashed swiftly upwards athwart the portholes.

" It is now three miles," remarked Maracot. " I will turn on the oxygen, Mr. Headley, for it is certainly very close. There is one thing," he added, with his dry, cackling laugh. " It will certainly be the Maracot Deep from this time onwards. When Captain Howie takes back the news my colleagues will see to it that my grave is also my monument. Even Bulow of Giessen——" He babbled on about some unintelligible scientific grievance.

We sat in silence again, watching the needle as it crawled on to its fourth mile. At one point we struck something heavy, which

shook us so violently that I feared that we would turn upon our side. It may have been a huge fish, or conceivably we may have bumped upon some projection of the cliff over the edge of which we had been precipitated. That edge had seemed to us at the time to be such a wondrous depth, and now looking back at it from our dreadful abyss it might almost have been the surface. Still we swirled and circled lower and lower through the dark green waste of waters. Twenty-five thousand feet now was registered upon the dial.

"We are nearly at our journey's end," said Maracot. "My Scott's recorder gave me twenty-six thousand seven hundred last year at the deepest point. We shall know our fate within a few minutes. It may be that the shock will crush us. It may be——"

And at that moment we landed.

There was never a babe lowered by its mother on to a feather-bed who nestled down more gently than we on to the extreme bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. The soft thick elastic ooze upon which we lit was a perfect buffer, which saved us from the slightest jar. We hardly moved upon our seats, and it is as well that we did not, for we had perched upon some sort of a projecting hummock, clothed thickly with the viscous gelatinous mud, and there we were balanced, rocking gently with nearly half our base projecting and unsupported. There was a danger that we would tip over on our side, but finally we steadied down and remained motionless. As we did so Dr. Maracot, staring out through his porthole, gave a cry of surprise and hurriedly turned out our electric light.

TO our amazement we could still see clearly. There was a dim, misty light outside which streamed through our portholes like the cold radiance of a winter morning. We looked out at the strange scene, and with no help from our own lights we could see clearly for some hundred yards in each direction. It was impossible, inconceivable, but none the less the evidence of our senses told us that it was a fact. The great ocean floor is luminous.

"Why not?" cried Maracot, when we had stood for a minute or two in silent wonder. "Should I not have foreseen it? What is this pteropod or globigerina ooze? Is it not the product of decay, the mouldering bodies of a billion billion organic creatures? And is decay not associated with phosphorescent luminosity? Where, in all creation, would it be seen if it were not here? Ah! it is indeed hard that we should have such a demonstration and be unable to send our knowledge back to the world."

"And yet," I remarked, "we have scooped half a ton of radiolarian jelly at a time and detected no such radiance."

"It would lose it, doubtless, in its long journey to the surface. And what is half a ton compared to these far-stretching plains of slow putrescence? And see, see," he cried in uncontrollable excitement, "the deep sea creatures graze upon this organic carpet even as our herds on land graze upon the meadows!"

As he spoke a flock of big black fish, heavy and squat, came slowly over the ocean bed towards us, nuzzling among the spongy growths and nibbling away as they advanced. Another huge red creature, like a foolish cow of the ocean, was chewing the cud in front of my porthole, and others were grazing here and there, raising their heads from time to time to gaze at this strange object which had so suddenly appeared among them.

I COULD only marvel at Maracot, who in that foul atmosphere, seated under the very shadow of death, still obeyed the call of Science and scribbled his observations in his note-book. Without following his precise methods, I none the less made my own mental notes, which will remain for ever as a picture stamped upon my brain. The lowest plains of ocean consist of red clay, but here it was overlaid by the grey bathybian slime which formed an undulating plain as far as our eyes could reach. This plain was not smooth, but was broken by numerous strange rounded hillocks like that upon which we had perched, all glimmering in the spectral light. Between these little hills there darted great clouds of strange fish, many of them quite unknown to Science, exhibiting every shade of colour, but black and red predominating. Maracot watched them with suppressed excitement and chronicled them in his notes.

The air had become very foul, and again we were only able to save ourselves by a fresh emission of oxygen. Curiously enough, we were all hungry—I should rather say ravenous—and we fell upon the potted beef with bread and butter, washed down by whisky and water, which the foresight of Maracot had provided. With my perceptions stimulated by this refreshment, I was seated at my look-out portal and longing for a last cigarette, when my eyes caught something which sent a whirl of strange thoughts and anticipations through my mind.

I have said that the undulating grey plain on every side of us was studded with what seemed like hummocks. A particularly large one was in front of my porthole, and I looked out at it within a range of thirty feet. There was some peculiar mark

upon the side of it, and as I glanced along I saw to my surprise that this mark was repeated again and again until it was lost round the curve. When one is so near death it takes much to give one a thrill about anything connected with this world, but my breath failed me for a moment and my heart stood still as I suddenly realized that it was a frieze at which I was looking and that, barnacled and worn as it was, the hand of man had surely at some time carved these faded figures. Maracot and Scanlan crowded to my porthole and gazed out in utter amazement at these signs of the omnipresent energies of man.

"It is carving, for sure!" cried Scanlan. "I guess this dump has been the roof of a building. Then these other ones are buildings also. Say, boss, we've dropped plumb on to a regular burg."

"It is, indeed, an ancient city," said Maracot. "Geology teaches that the seas have once been continents and the continents seas, but I have always distrusted the idea that in times so recent as the quaternary there could have been an Atlantic subsidence. Plato's report of Egyptian gossip had then a foundation of fact. These volcanic formations confirm the view that this subsidence was due to seismic activity."

"There is regularity about these domes," I remarked. "I begin to think that they are not separate houses, but that they are cupolas and form the ornaments of the roof of some huge building."

"I guess you are right," said Scanlan. "There are four big ones at the corners and the small ones in lines between. It's some building, if we could see the whole of it! You could put the whole Merribank plant inside it—and then some."

"It has been buried up to the roof by the constant dropping from above," said Maracot. "On the other hand, it has not decayed. We have a constant temperature of a little over 32° Fahrenheit in the great depths, which would arrest destructive processes. Even the dissolution of the Bathic remains which pave the floor of the ocean and incidentally give us this luminosity must be a very slow one. But, dear me! this marking is not a frieze but an inscription."

There was no doubt that he was right. The same symbol recurred every here and there. These marks were unquestionably letters of some archaic alphabet.

"I have made a study of Phœnician antiquities, and there is certainly something suggestive and familiar in these characters," said our leader. "Well, we have seen a buried city of ancient days, my friends, and we carry a wonderful piece of knowledge with us to the grave. There is no more to be learned. Our book of knowledge is closed. I agree with you that the sooner the end comes the better."

It could not now be long delayed. The air was stagnant and dreadful. So heavy was it with the carbon products that the oxygen could hardly force its way out against the pressure. By standing on the settee one was able to get a gulp of purer air, but the mephitic reek was slowly rising. Dr. Maracot folded his arms with an air of resignation and sank his head upon his breast. Scanlan was now overpowered by the fumes and was already sprawling upon the floor. My own head was swimming, and I felt an intolerable weight at my chest. I closed my eyes and my senses were rapidly slipping away. Then I opened them for one last glimpse of that world which I was leaving, and as I did so I staggered to my feet with a hoarse scream of amazement.

A human face was looking in at us through the porthole!

WAS it my delirium? I clutched at the shoulder of Maracot and shook him violently. He sat up and stared, wonder-struck and speechless at this apparition. If he saw it as well as I, it was no figment of the brain. The face was long and thin, dark in complexion, with a short, pointed beard, and two vivid eyes darting here and there in quick, questioning glances which took in every detail of our situation. The utmost amazement was visible upon the man's face. Our lights were now full on, and it must indeed have been a strange and vivid picture which presented itself to his gaze in that tiny chamber of death, where one man lay senseless and two others glared out at him with the twisted, contorted features of dying men, cyanosed by incipient asphyxiation. We both had our hands to our throats, and our heaving chests carried their message of despair. The man gave a wave of his hand and hurried away.

"He has deserted us!" cried Maracot.

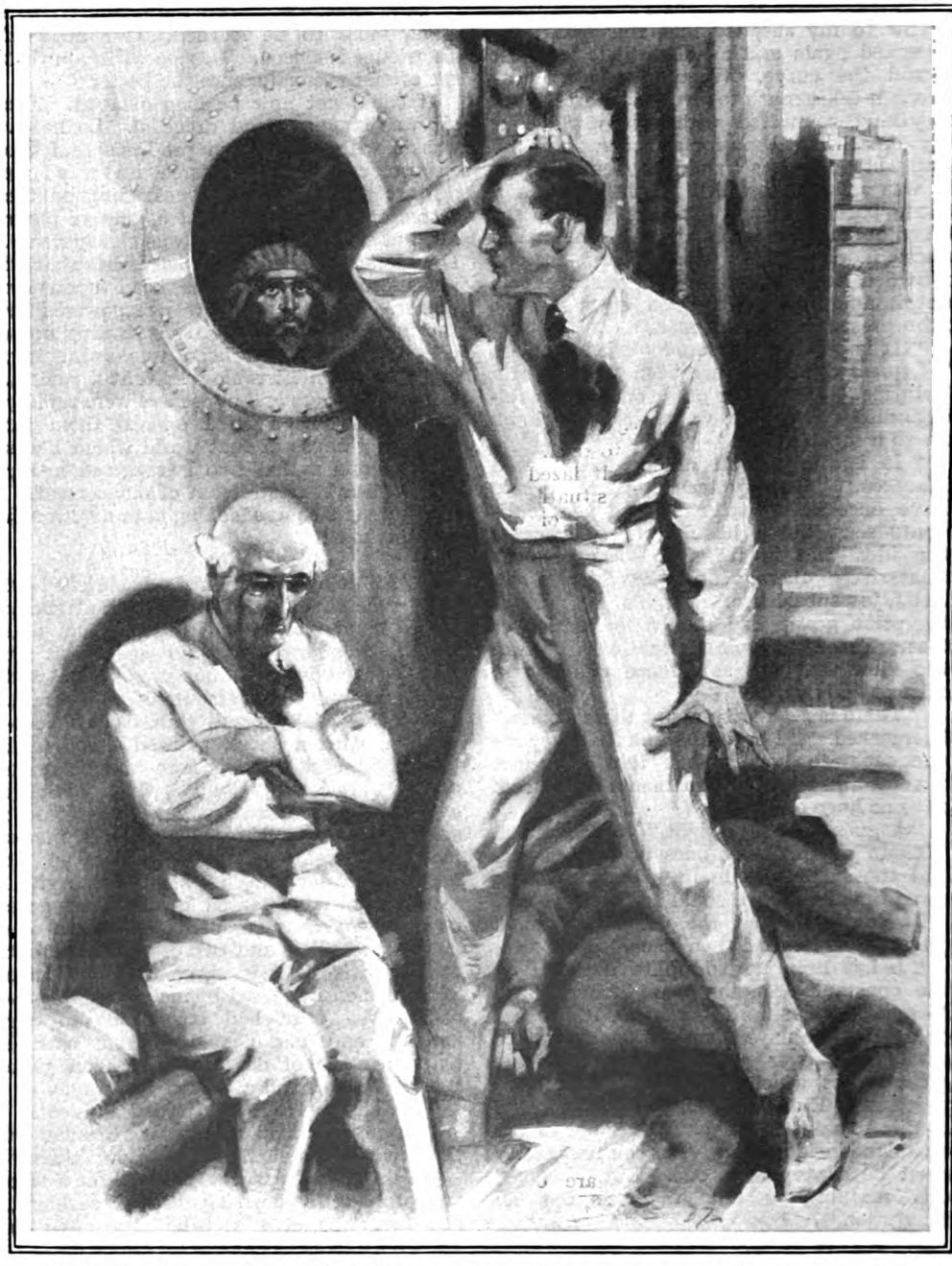
"Or gone for help. Let us get Scanlan on the couch. It's death for him down there."

We dragged the mechanic on to the settee and propped his head against the cushions. His face was grey and he murmured in delirium, but his pulse was still perceptible.

"There is hope for us yet," I croaked.

"But it is madness!" cried Maracot. "How can man live at the bottom of the ocean? How can he breathe? It is collective hallucination. My young friend, we are going mad."

Looking out at the bleak, lonely grey landscape in the dreary spectral light, I felt that it might be as Maracot said.



I staggered to my feet with a hoarse scream of amazement. A human face was looking in at us through the porthole!

Then suddenly I was aware of movement. Shadows were flitting through the distant water. They hardened and thickened into moving figures. A crowd of people were hurrying across the ocean bed in our direction. An instant later they had assembled in front of the porthole and were pointing and gesticulating in animated debate. There were several women in the crowd, but the greater part were men, one of whom, a powerful figure with a very large head and a full black beard, was clearly a person of

authority. He made a swift inspection of our steel shell, and, since the edge of our base projected over the place on which we rested, he was able to see that there was a hinged trap-door at the bottom. He now sent a messenger flying back, while he made energetic and commanding signs to us to open the door from within.

"Why not?" I asked. "We may as well be drowned as be smothered. I can stand it no longer."

"We may not be drowned," said Maracot. "The water entering from below cannot rise above the level of the compressed air. Give Scanlan some brandy. He must make an effort, if it is his last one."

I forced a drink down the mechanic's throat. He gulped and looked round him with wondering eyes. Between us we got him erect on the settee and stood on either side of him. He was still half-d[illegible], but in a few words I explained the sit[illegible]on.

"There is a chance of chlorine poisoning if the water reaches the batteries," said Maracot. "Open every air tube, for the more pressure we can get the less water may enter. Now help me while I pull upon the lever."

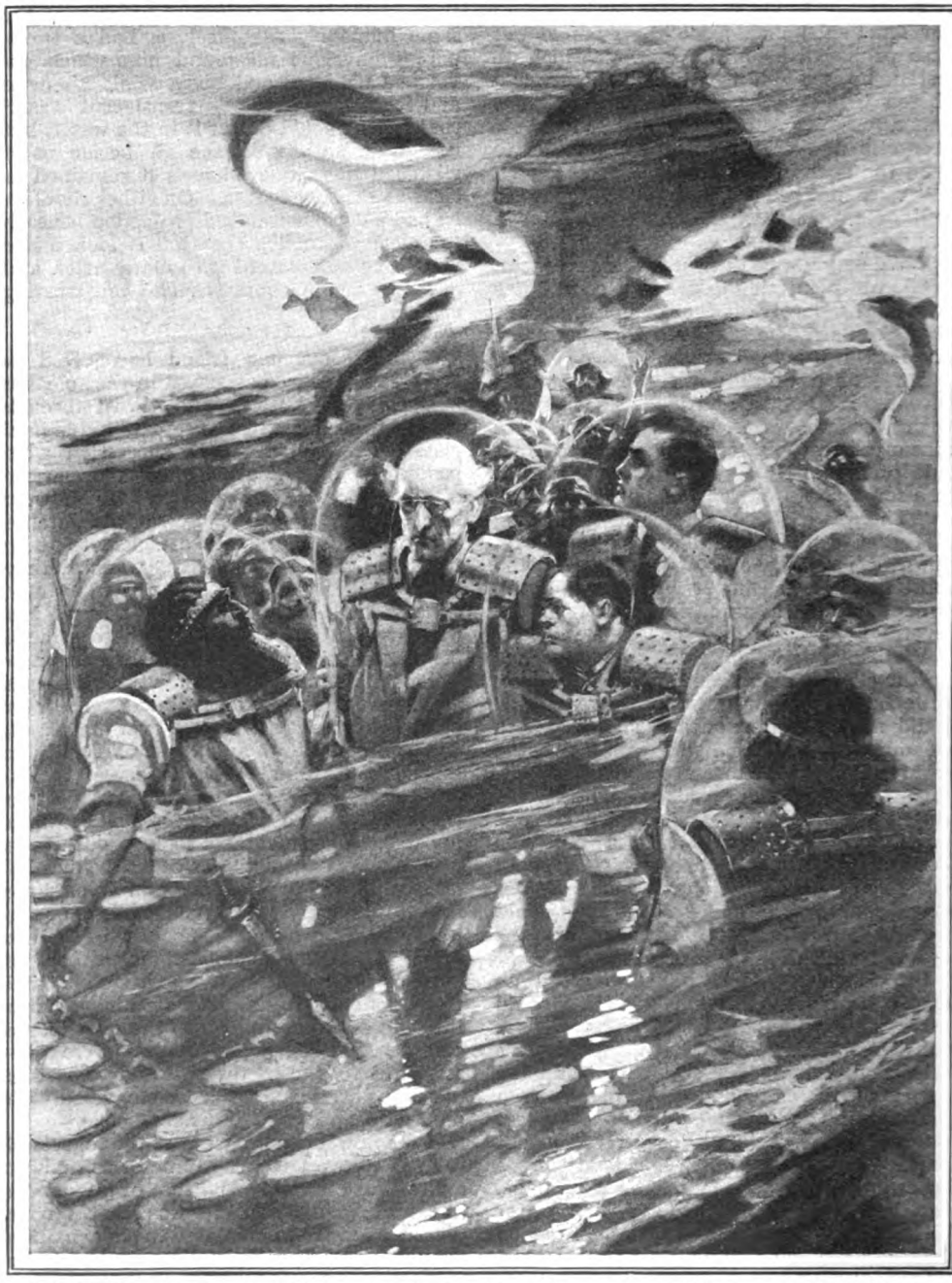
We bent our weight upon it and yanked up the circular plate from the bottom of our little home, though I felt like a suicide as I did so. The green water, sparkling and gleaming under our light, came gurgling and surging in. It rose rapidly to our feet, to our knees, to our waists, and there it stopped. But the pressure of the air was intolerable. Our heads buzzed and the drums of our ears were bursting. We could not have lived in such an atmosphere for long. Only by clutching at the rack could we save ourselves from falling back into the waters beneath us.

From our higher position we could no longer see through the portholes, nor could we imagine what steps were being taken for our deliverance. Indeed, that any effective help could come to us seemed beyond the power of thought, and yet there was a commanding and purposeful air about these people, and especially about that squat bearded chieftain, which inspired vague hopes. Suddenly we were aw[illegible]of his face looking up at us through the water beneath, and an instant later he had passed through the circular opening and had clambered on to the settee, so that he was standing by our side—a short sturdy figure, not higher than my shoulder, but surveying us with large brown eyes, which were full of a half-amused confidence, as who should say, "You poor devils; you think you are in a very bad way, but I can clearly see the road out."

Only now was I aware of a very amazing thing. The man, if indeed he was of the same humanity as ourselves, had a transparent envelope all round him which enveloped his head and body, while his arms and legs were free. So translucent was it that no one could detect it in the water, but now that he was in the air beside us it glistened like silver, though it remained as clear as the finest glass. On either shoulder he had a curious rounded projection beneath the clear protective sheath. It looked like an oblong box pierced with many holes, and gave him an appearance as if he were wearing epaulettes.

WHEN our new friend had joined us another face appeared in the aperture of the bottom and thrust through it what seemed like a great bubble of glass. Three of these in succession were passed in and floated upon the surface of the water. Then six small boxes were handed up and our new acquaintance tied one with the straps attached to them to each of our shoulders, whence they stood up like his own. Already I began to surmise that no infraction of natural law was involved in the life of these strange people, and that while one box in some new fashion was a producer of air the other was an absorber of waste products. He now passed the transparent suits over our heads, and we felt that they clasped us tightly in the upper arm and waist by elastic bands, so that no water could penetrate. Within we breathed with perfect ease, and it was a joy to me to see Maracot looking out at me with his eyes twinkling as of old behind his glasses, while Bill Scanlan's grin assured me that the life-giving oxygen had done its work, and that he was his cheerful self once more. Our rescuer looked from one to another of us with grave satisfaction, and then motioned to us to follow him through the trap-door and out on to the floor of the ocean. A dozen willing hands were outstretched to pull us through and to sustain our first faltering steps as we staggered with our feet deep in the slimy ooze.

Even now I cannot get past the marvel of it! There we were, the three of us, unhurt and at our ease at the bottom of a five-mile abyss of water. Where was that terrific pressure which had exercised the imagination of so many scientists? We were no more affected by it than were the dainty fish which swam around us. It is true that, so far as our bodies were concerned, we were protected by these delicate bells of vitrine, which were in truth tougher than the strongest steel, but even our limbs, which were exposed, felt no more than a firm constriction from the water which one learned in time to disregard. It was



Within the transparent suits we breathed with perfect ease. Our rescuer looked from one to another of us with grave satisfaction, and then motioned to us to follow him.

wonderful to stand together and to look back at the shell from which we had emerged. We had left the batteries at work, and it was a wondrous object with its streams of yellow light flooding out from each side, while clouds of fishes gathered at each window. As we watched it the leader took Maracot by the hand, and we followed them both across the watery morass, clumping heavily through the sticky surface.

(To be continued.)

Something Different

By

COSMO HAMILTON

Illustrated by
FRED. W. PURVIS

"YOU may look upon me as the Big Joke, as everybody else does," said Crookshanks, with a most unexpected emotion; "but let me tell you this: I'd exchange all my millions at any moment—yes, all of them—for your empty pockets, your unknown name, your reputation as a flying man, and your confounded laugh. And I mean what I say—so help me."

Young Worthing was gifted with the sort of laugh that made canaries burst into song in the dark, passers-by look over their shoulders, and pessimists wonder if, after all, they had not been a trifle hasty in believing that all living men had failed as dismally as they.

With his curly head thrown back and his lithe body balanced on the rail of the veranda, the boy let it all out that golden afternoon, while Crookshanks, whose face was tragic, watched it travel across the sweep of grass to a red-capped infant playing alone on the brown rocks and all along the quay to a man working on the engine of a white yawl that lay on the sparkling sea at North-East Harbour.

"My remark was not intended to be funny," said Crookshanks, gravely.

Whereupon, moved to greater mirth, Worthing did it again. This time the red-capped infant chuckled and missed his footing and the man with the sulky engine grinned all over his face. But never a laughter line broke the solid depression round Crookshanks's eyes.

Without waiting for a further outburst, he wheeled round, stalked jerkily to the other end of the veranda, and stood facing the wide horizon with his hands over his ears.

Worthing was amazed. He had always imagined that he knew this man better than any of his acquaintances. He had always held up Charles G. Crookshanks as one of the Lucky Ones—one of those unnumerous men who had the right to beam on life and look into the cold eyes of Destiny without a quiver. It is true that he had never seen him do either of these things and had found him, on the contrary, modest, self-effacing, and queerly humble. It is equally true that he avoided people and was never to be found within a mile of a social function. He put down this unconquerable shyness to the fact that his friend was over-conscious of a certain verbal unreadiness and an odd timidity in the presence of women—characteristics, according to the affable, confident, and homogeneous Worthing, which were easily overcome. And so far as looks went he had always regarded Crookshanks as one of those very ugly men whose irregular features, unruly hair, and angular figure won rather than repelled. What was lost by his appearance was more than made up by his kindness, and he possessed the tremendous asset of comparative youth. He was on the sunny side of thirty.

No wonder that this astonishing and unexpected confession took Worthing's breath away; that this sudden letting down of what had appeared hitherto to be a complacent fourth wall left the young flying man unable, so to speak, to find a mental landing. All these millions in exchange for empty pockets, for a name no longer remembered by a forgetful public

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to whom the war itself was now only an annoying memory? The man must be ill or mad.

Sympathy as well as curiosity hurried Worthing to the end of the veranda and made him put his arm round his good friend's narrow shoulders. "I didn't mean to hurt you, old man," he said in his most charming way. "I did think, honestly, that you were talking to get a laugh. What's the idea?"

There was a moment's silence, broken only by the child-like cry of a gull and the chatty pitt-pitt of a motor-boat that echoed from the nearest island. And then Crookshanks spoke. "You remember what led up to this," he said, in a low voice.

"Certainly I do. You were telling me that you would like to marry a girl in the hotel to whom you haven't been introduced. You said that you would give your hopes of heaven if she'd be your wife. I said, 'Why make any such sacrifice? Tell her how much money you've got. Tell her that you're Crookshanks's Cosmic Corn Cure and she'll leap into your arms.'"

A hand was clapped over his mouth.

"Sssh!" whispered Crookshanks, pale with horror. "For pity's sake don't mention those awful words again."

Having a small but succulent fish in its beak, the gull was silent now. The pitt-pitt of the motor-boat had ceased. But this time the silence was emphasized by the soft purr of an opulent car and the sharp ringing of the telephone bell on the hut on the beam of the quay.

"So that's the idea?" said Worthing.

"Yes, that's the idea," said Crookshanks. "Those four atrocious C's."

He put his hands on Worthing's shoulders and looked long and deeply into the eyes of the man whom he regarded as his only friend. He seemed to be searching into his soul in order to discover whether his sympathy was true, and he did so with a wistfulness and an appeal that were rather painful to watch. During that brief emotional moment shyness was forgotten, self-consciousness was forgotten, and in their places was the pathetic desire to complete the wreckage of the stucco which had hid his feelings from the world. Taking Worthing by the arm, he led him across a sweep of grass, along a narrow path bordered with wild strawberries, to a deserted place which in the soft hour before sunset was haunted by Jacks and Jills.

"BOB," he said, "I'm a comic tragic figure, ashamed of my millions, ashamed of my name. Whenever I hear anybody laugh I think that they're laughing at me. I've been laughed at all my life. It was my father who invented the Corn Cure and worked it into a business which made him a very rich man, and when I sneaked into the world it was to find that his name and business, like mother-in-law and twins, had become the surest laugh on the stage. Any dud had only to say Crookshanks's Corn Cure to convulse the people in front."

"But, my dear old thing——"

"Let me get it off my chest, Bob, now that I've begun. The first day I went to school, for instance, every little boy in my class turned a grinning face and cried out, 'How're the plasters, Cornie?' Even the headmaster made jokes about me to establish himself as a wit. There hasn't been a single day, hardly a single hour in all my life, Bob, during which these cursed corn cures haven't been thrown in my face."

"Well, but look at the money——"

"I buy a pair of socks at any shop in the city, and when I ask that they shall be put on my account and stammer out my name, a Corn Cure smile spreads over the face of the assistant and 'I'm wearing one now,' says he. I have only to register at some hotel, it doesn't matter which, and the sight of my name draws the old familiar joke, the old familiar smile. I get into conversation on long train journeys with grave and elderly men, and am treated as an ordinary nice person until we exchange cards at the end of the journey. Let him be a judge, a clergyman, a senator—it's all the same. His voice breaks, his foot twitches, and I'm the old and deadly joke."

Worthing's face was grave. "Um," he said, "I'll own that's pretty bad."

"When my father died, probably of corns on the liver, I went into the business hating it with the whole of my strength and spirit. What happened? I doubled it in five years."

"No!"

"Yes. I was fated, it seemed, to invent those curious phrases which stick in the public mind. I was the slogan king. Against my will I made the name of Crookshanks known to the shoeless natives not only of the South Sea Islands but of darkest Africa. No missionary went forth without me, and if now you were to find yourself a thousand miles from the smallest port on any primeval coast, and were to break through the jungle upon half-a-dozen huts, the first thing you would stumble upon would be an empty box of irresistible 'Pedal Joys.'"

"Fame! What more do you want?"

"Bob, I was born with the desire to be a great and heroic figure. From the first moment that I could read my soul swelled with heroism, my heart was filled with dreams of fame as a preacher, a soldier,

a poet—any one of the glorious and dignified professions which demand honours and respect. And here I am a millionaire—the Great Joke—constantly humiliated, unable to propose to any nice girl for fear that when she finds out that I am *that* Crookshanks she'll burst out laughing and say something about my feet."

" Well, let's think now. Why not attach your name to something new ? "

" It's no good, old man, I'm doomed. I'm the gravedigger who wants to be Hamlet, the undertaker who wants to be reading the funeral service. I am the spirit of a Great Person in the body of a man who represents nothing but a small round box in which reposes a little circle of something which ' Makes walking a pleasure,' ' Takes irritation out of life,' and ' Reduces divorce to a minimum.' Think, just think, what all these people who snub me and laugh at

" When I stammer out my name, a Corn Cure smile spreads over the face of the assistant and ' I'm wearing one now,' says he."

" Um, that's not so good," said Bob.

" If I were responsible for a cough mixture, or a headache cure, a tooth paste, a hair restorer, or even for those queer little indiarubber things which comfort young children when they are getting teeth —I dare not mention the word—I'd have nothing to grumble at. But oh, my dear Bob, there is something so low about feet."

me and give me a sniff would say and do if, instead of being Crookshanks's Corn Cure, I were General Crookshanks, Judge Crookshanks, the Reverend Doctor Crookshanks, a writer, a painter, or the president of a bank."

" What then ? "

" Then would they look at me with the eyes of dead fish ! Then would they burst

into a loud guffaw when they saw me coming and fling off stale jokes that date back to the early days of red-nosed comedians and Irish knockabouts! Then would I have to beg for a kind word like a man with asses' ears!"

Once more his voice broke, his lower lip quivered, and on his nice irregular features there was an expression of tragedy that would have moved the Sphinx.

But Worthing was ultra modern in his point of view. He had inherited or acquired a pachydermatous hide. He was very good-looking, and his sense of humour was uncomfortably keen. Unhandicapped by sensitiveness he would willingly exchange his name, his laugh, and his reputation as a flying man for a tithe of the corn cure which stuck to the soul of his friend. With a steam yacht as big as a small liner, blatantly called the s.s. *Bunion*, with an enormous Rolls-Royce on the bonnet of which he would place the well-known box as a mascot, with a house at Newport called "Cornville," and a hunting-box in Westchester with the words "Cosmic Court" on the gate, what would he care for the laughter of the world? He would go into the vault of his bank and spend so many days a month in cutting off his coupons with glee and thankfulness, uttering blessings on the heads of all those bootmakers whose ready-made shoes encouraged the sale of those little circles of relief associated in the minds of the peoples of this earth with the name which the man in front of him was so ashamed to bear.

And, moreover, he said so. He said so rapidly and with great eloquence—more eloquence than he ever supposed he possessed. "I'd get the laugh, the bird, or any other old thing," he said, coming to an end, "because, with your millions, I know that I could buy the respect, the affection, and the friendship of every living soul. Take up a course of Pelmanism, have several doses of psycho-analysis, go in for a round of pine baths, electric massage, boxing—do something, however expensive, to get hold of a sense of humour. That's what you need, Charles G. Don't try to do something different. Be proud of being the son of your father, but be able to laugh at yourself. With that gift you could go with complete confidence to the girl in your hotel, and I'll bet my life that before the end of the week her fond parents would put an announcement in *The Times* as to her forthcoming marriage to the Enemy of the Corn."

He got up and inflated his chest. Then, into a grateful world, he let out his gorgeous laugh. Once more the red-capped infant caught it, chuckled, and missed his footing. Once more the sun-tanned man, still at work on his sulky engine, grinned all over his face.

Crookshanks got up too. He was pale and hangdog and there were tears in his eyes. "Bob, it can't be done. I shall never acquire humour. I've suffered far too much. But if, by some incredible accident, the people in this hotel will be nice to me and take me into their games and conversation and forget the darned old joke, I'll go back to corn cures and carry on refreshed. And if, during such a blissful holiday, I can succeed in winning that girl for my wife—oh, Bob. I'll go on writing slogans and revel in the job."

With a sense of the deepest jealousy he watched the larky Worthing leap from rock to rock like a mountain goat on his way to the hotel. He envied his youth, his flying record, his name that stood for unadvertised excellence, his looks, his spirits, his irresponsible attitude towards life and the feminine sex. Above all, he envied the boy his home at Seal Harbour, his charming family, the affection, sympathy, and devotion which he himself had never known.

Having driven into North-East Harbour after lunch that day he had had only just time before meeting Worthing to register at the hotel, give a cursory glance at his room that faced the sea, and catch an emotional glimpse of Mary Marbury, for whom, even at first sight, he would sacrifice his soul.

THE hotel had been open two days, and as yet was sprinkled merely with the beginnings of the crowd which would eventually make it resemble an enormous tin of sardines. Its barrack-like foyer, filled with stiff cane chairs and circles of blue grass mats, wore the appearance of a schoolboy made clean for a Sunday treat. The newly-polished floors bore hardly a single rubber-sole mark, and the vast drawing-rooms, devoid of all feelings of home, gave forth a pungent aroma of soap and cleaning fluid.

But there was an air of latent energy and even politeness about the bell-boys, whose uniforms reeked of gasolene and camphor balls, and the room clerk, who had nothing to do, and worked extremely hard. His round, fat face gleamed with a constantly affectionate smile, and he leapt gymnastically at the merest chance to show how much he intended to do for the guests when the rush began.

Waitresses flitted about the dining-room putting flowers on the tables and holding brief but definite arguments with the pompous captain who was endeavouring at once to establish himself as a man of iron will.

In very short skirts and extremely diaphanous shirt-waists, there was an air of spring-like joy and release about these girls who had just left their teaching jobs in the schools of inland towns. They scented the sea with keen delight, and Charlestoned singly in and out of the vast array of tables which would presently be occupied by hungry children with sand in their hair and ears.

The inevitable notice-board was utterly devoid of cards. It would later be covered with announcements of church services, osteopathic practitioners, tea-houses, Christian Science lectures, tutors on vacation, amateur theatricals in Community Halls, readings from Masefield by elderly spinsters who ought to know better, swimming competitions, beauty treatments by robust ladies who had worked upon the features of the *élite* of New York, and palmists who took in washing and sold Colonial antiques.

The lift-boy, who was working his way through college—plucky lad—gave himself surreptitious joy-rides when the clerk's broad shoulders were turned. At other times he sat between the bell-boys and played a game of pinching, which gave promise of lengthy battles in the bedrooms at the back.

All these things were noticed by Crookshanks when he returned from his lonely vigil, expecting to be met with the inevitable grin of everybody in sight. To his immense astonishment, however, the bouncing clerk leapt over his counter and came up with a beaming smile. His expression was obsequious as well as cordial, and there was absolutely nothing of the old Corn Cure gibe in his eyes.

"Well, Doctor," he said, "how do you like North-East Harbour? Isn't it one of the most beautiful spots you have ever seen in your life? Aren't the islands wonderful? Hasn't the air got a kick that undermines Prohibition? Isn't the sunshine dazzling? Isn't it the greatest place you've ever seen on earth?"

Having nothing left by way of criticism Crookshanks murmured "Yes," and took up a firm position in order to receive the blow. "Why 'doctor'?" he asked himself. He glanced from boy to boy, and saw to his intense astonishment that the Corn Cure look was absent from their highly intelligent eyes. What was the meaning of this? Was the title that he had been given a new and more subtle form of cruelty?

An elderly gentleman came up, puffing a little, and extended a friendly hand. "Doctor," he said, in a loud and hearty voice, "pardon me for addressing you, but I want to tell you right now that North-East Harbour is honoured by your presence. Supreme Court Judges, presidents of banks, ex-Attorney-Generals, retired Admirals and Governors of States may be seen here any time. I am glad, therefore, to be the first to welcome America's most distinguished scientist to Harbour View Hotel, and it will give me the greatest pleasure to present my wife and daughter as soon as they come in."

He not only held Crookshanks's hand in a warm and cordial embrace, but he grasped his elbow too. Then he bowed, walked to the lift, and was removed like an elderly fairy in a Christmas pantomime.

HIS place was immediately taken by the capable, white-haired woman who acted as hostess there, and who introduced people who didn't want to know each other, in her overpowering way. Before Crookshanks could recover from the shock and amazement provided by the clerk and the elderly man his hand was seized again.

"Let me be among the first to welcome you to Harbour View. Your world-renowned work in the cause of medical science is, need I say, very well known to me. Ha, ha! We have had many distinguished visitors, but you're the most thrilling of all."

Long practice had made the dear lady a past-mistress in the shattering art of volubility. The arrival of a touring car, however, took her quickly and luckily to the veranda, so that Crookshanks, trembling in his boots, was left like Charlie Chaplin after having received an enormous quantity of floury dough full in his whimsical face.

He stood in a thick fog of ecstasy and fright. For once in his life he had been taken seriously, with respect and admiration. He was indeed something different, something very different, because, for the first time, he had been treated not as a comic person, not as a victim of his own efficient slogans, but as one of the distinguished and responsible people that he would give his ears to be. It never dawned upon him that Worthing had rushed back from the rocks and deliberately misinformed the clerk so that his depressed friend might revel in being a hero for a while. It was one of those thoughtless pieces of cruelty which, though meant for the best, inevitably lead to complications, prevarications, false glory, and final shame.

Crookshanks had heard of his famous namesake who was known all over the world. But as he stood with a whirling head, wavering between honesty and the overwhelming temptation to enjoy a much-desired flattery and deference, he asked himself what harm it would do if he accepted the reflected

glory of the famous doctor for several blissful days. He argued that he had not himself performed this act of misrepresentation. Oh, no, no. The whole thing had been thrust upon him out of a blue sky, and at the very moment when he stood so desperately in need of a mental and spiritual tonic. "It's terrible and it's wonderful," he said to himself, marching up and down. "It delights me and it frightens me, but I—I'll put it up to fate. Yes, yes, yes. I'll let things take their course. I *will* be Dr. Crookshanks, the celebrated Dr. Crookshanks, who has done so much for science and whose name's on the roll of fame. He'll never know, and I'll take care to do nothing to disgrace him. Within an hour, perhaps, or even less—think of that—I may make an engagement to sail to-morrow with that dear, sweet girl." Forgetting all about the elevator he rushed upstairs to his room.

IF Worthing could have guessed the miraculous effect of his hasty scheme upon his tragic friend he would have found it hard to laugh. And if, better still, he could have put his eye to the keyhole of Crookshanks's bedroom door he would have seen him drop his pessimism and depression like a worn-out suit of clothes. He would have seen him pounce upon his luggage, draw out his brightest tie, and put on a pair of shoes which had seemed, at the time of purchase, to be reckless and over-smart. They were white with insertions of brown. He had seen them worn on the stage by juveniles and in life by giglots. He had never expected to rise to such reckless heights as ever to be seen in them. He even went so far as to put brilliantine on his hair.

Thus dolled up he stood for a moment in front of his looking-glass and gazed at a face that was new and strange to him. There was bravery in his eyes. The corners of his mouth were turned up and all about him there was an air of brazen confidence. He would have been totally unrecognizable to his manager, secretary, and the large staff of clerks among whom he was wont timidly to pass so much of his time, hating himself and hating the Corn Cure which was the foundation of the Crookshanks building whose head was in the clouds.

With elastic step, a high chin, and a thread of excitement running through his solar plexus, he made his way down to the veranda. He intended to walk up and down in order to encourage an appetite and settle into his shoes. There was an hour before dinner—that quiet hour when, in all such places, the hungry guests waited impatiently in the lounges for the dining-room to open. Several people came up from the quay from whom he received shy but friendly glances. It was obvious that the news of his arrival had been spread about. He had become already the lion of the hotel.

He laughed and shot his cuff.

With a rapid increase of his pulse he saw that Mary Marbury had come out of the lounge and was standing facing the sea. Her charming figure was silhouetted against a sky made glorious by the setting sun. Crookshanks told himself again as he stopped to gaze that she epitomized the ideal wife whose imaginary picture he had hung over the mantelpiece of the library in his house—that quiet book-lined room in which he spent his happy hours. As Charles G. Crookshanks it would have been a wild impossibility for him to screw up enough courage to say a single word. As Dr. Crookshanks, a famous and serious person, it was quite a different thing. With the most astonishing confidence he went across and bowed. He found himself calm, cool, and unselfconscious, with a perfectly normal pulse.

"Glorious weather," he said.

"A red sky at night is the shepherd's delight," she answered, with a smile.

He had never seen such teeth.

"How long are you going to be here?" he asked.

And she said, "It rather depends on father. He's restless and likes moving about."

He had never seen such hair. His favourite colour—brown; chestnut brown, soft with natural waves.

"*My* plans are a little uncertain," he said, "but it will be awfully nice if you will allow me to take you sailing once or twice—every day if you like it—I do—and I can then point out to you, or you can point out to me—it doesn't matter—the various pleasant islands—why they're there, who lives on them, and—and——"

He had tied himself into a knot. The fact that all of a sudden he had become a man of distinction didn't give him the immediate gift of an easy flow of words. But his involved remarks were said with such a charming smile, so friendly, courteous, and companionable an air, that his final stammer meant nothing except perhaps a slight exhaustion of breath.

"I love sailing," she said. "I was brought up on a boat. I persuaded father to come here because of these most workmanlike yawls." They might have been friends for years.

In fact, with astonishment and joy, Crookshanks told himself that she treated him not as a celebrated person but as a common or garden man to whom she had taken a liking. There was no deference in

her manner, none of the awe which had been shown by the others in that place. It was frank, natural, and honest, and when she looked at him squarely and without any attempt to exercise the wiles of her sex, he thrilled at the thought that she, like Worthing, found his ugliness nice. With a more than ordinary amount of female intuition she saw in him, he thought, a man who was naturally eager to enjoy the invigoration of sailing and the pleasure of being with her.

He put all this down to the fact that she had been brought up among men of distinction and had hobnobbed with opera singers and authors, world-renowned artists, presidents of women's university clubs, and the like. What was a doctor to her?

Just as he was about to suggest that they should take a turn he was pounced upon by a stout, flustered, and extremely breathless man. He might have been either a professional lecturer or a trainer of vaudeville dogs.

Crookshanks imagined that he had come for an autograph.

"My name's Hawk," said he.

"Oh, indeed!" said Crookshanks, thinking how very much better Turkey would have been. "Thank you very much."

He bubbled with indignation. "Let me tell you that I'm a doctor who's never had your luck. I came to this hotel for a holiday —to pay my way by practising among the guests."

"Ah!" said Crookshanks. "A very good idea."

"I've been provided with an office and a couple of rooms in the east wing which are over the kitchen, and so are no use as bedrooms because they're much too hot."

Crookshanks was affable. He imagined that his celebrated namesake, exposed to such interruptions, would have adopted an affable manner under similar conditions. "You must leave your windows open."

"We have had many distinguished visitors, but you're the most thrilling of all."

"The point is this," said Hawk, swelling visibly. "I was already on a fair way to treat Mr. Irving Prouty, and to make an examination of Mr. Parker Livingston at twelve o'clock to-morrow, but your confounded arrival has done me in the eye. I'm just as good as dead. I may as well shut up shop."

"But, good heavens," said Crookshanks, "I don't intend to practise. I'm on a holiday, too."

A scoffing laugh rang out. " You must know precious little about these places if you can talk like that. You'll find yourself in that office every blessed day. Half the people in the place will develop illnesses just to be treated by you."

" That's absurd," said Crookshanks. " My brief spell of leisure must be respected here. I shall refuse to be consulted." Here was an appalling idea.

" But you can't refuse. The ethics of the profession make that impossible, you know that well enough. Ailing humanity must be attended to in holidays and out. You'll put your hand in my pocket and I shall have to go home." With steps that shook the veranda he commenced to march away.

Crookshanks bounded after him. " Live and let live," he cried. " I've no more intention of taking your patients than you have of taking mine. I shall go sailing early in the morning and I sha'n't be back till dark."

" Not a ghost of a chance," said Hawk. " I know these people. I know their desire to put themselves in the hands of the most advertised man. My office is yours already. All I can do is to pack my bags and push off in the morning with my tail between my legs. All I hope is that you'll give a thought to the poor devil whose holiday you've smashed up and whose fees you've taken away. That's all I've got to say."

Quivering with emotion he stumped into the hotel.

CROOKSHANKS was aghast. To do a struggling doctor out of a much-needed holiday was a perfectly dreadful thing. And the mere notion of having to examine ailing humanity as the result of his mild deception was too frightful to contemplate. What was he to do? Disappear at once? Go to the clerk, pretend that he had had an urgent call from New York, give up his room, and evacuate the position? To do so would mean his losing this most wonderful opportunity of cultivating the friendship—and perhaps something even better—of the girl who fulfilled his dreams. He said to himself: " Kind angels, help me now."

Standing irresolute among the *débris* of his plans, unable at once to decide upon a course, Crookshanks ventured to turn towards Mary Marbury, who had overheard the conversation with the indignant Hawk. Her expression was so sympathetic that before he could become selfconscious he made her his confidante. " What am I to do? " he asked. " I know that you have common sense. I feel convinced that in such disasters as earthquakes, wrecks at sea, theatre fires, and the like, you always keep your head. If I may say so without offence, I see in you a Florence Nightingale, a Nurse Cavell, and a modern Joan of Arc. Advise me. Help me out of this uncomfortable situation and add to my gratitude."

Before Miss Marbury could answer, a short and perky man, youngish, probably impertinent, and obviously pugnacious, issued from the hotel. He bore down upon Crookshanks carrying a book which must have cost four dollars. It was larger than most, and thick. Like all short and perky men, he walked where angels feared to tread, held post-mortems after bridge, and discussed contentious subjects with no consideration for other people's feelings. He planted himself in front of Crookshanks and tilted up his face.

" Have you by any chance ever studied the law? "

" Studied the law? " echoed Crookshanks. " I—I fail to understand."

" A perfectly simple question. In other words, do you know anything about the various punishments that are meted out in Courts of Justice for misrepresentation of facts? "

" No," said Crookshanks, rather sharply. " Why should I? Please explain what you mean."

A gleeful smile spread over the intruder's face. He bore even to a greater degree the air of thick conceit which is peculiar to his type. " Impersonation," he said, " with intent to delude and defraud. Two, five, seven, and ten years are often given for that."

" You may be right," said Crookshanks. " But why on earth tell me? " He intended to put up a fight.

" Altruism. In other words, the principle of living and acting for the interest of others. In this case, to protect the good-natured and gullible people who are staying in this hotel."

Crookshanks began to tremble at the knees. He saw himself undergoing two, five, seven, or ten years behind high and dreadful walls, among gangs of criminals. He couldn't find his voice.

And so the little man, whose name was Stitchley, fondled his book and went on. " The famous Dr. Crookshanks," he said, " as I have just discovered, is a big man in every sense of the word. Height, six foot one and a half. Weight, two hundred and sixty pounds. Age, fifty-six. Head hairless—magnificent dome. Face large, noble, a patriarchal beard. I surmise that his voice is deep, that he speaks slowly, and considers every word. That he writes in clear and simple prose, with an irrefutable knowledge of his subject, with gleams of unexpected humour, and an almost prophetic

touch. This has been proved by a cursory perusal of a volume, recently issued, which I found in the library of the hotel and consulted immediately upon learning that he was here."

Like a man who lives in cities and finds himself suddenly confronted with a dangerous beast, Crookshanks backed against the railing and gripped a post. Little drops of icy water were running down his spine.

Stitchley opened the book, at the beginning of which there was an admirably-reproduced photograph of the man he had so ably described. He held it out perkily. "If this is not another case of Jekyll and Hyde," he said, "how do you account for the amazing difference between Dr. Crookshanks and yourself?" He waited for an answer with a triumphant grin.

An answer was not forthcoming. Crookshanks's voice had entirely disappeared.

And so Mary Marbury spoke. "Altruism sometimes runs wild," she said, "and gets amateurs into trouble. What makes you suppose that this gentleman ever endeavoured to make people believe that he is the man who wrote that book?"

"He told the clerk he was."

"Oh, no, no," she said, firmly. "He did nothing of the sort."

"Well, then, perhaps you'll tell me how it got about? My information comes from Hawk, from Prouty, from Parker Livingstone, and from Mrs. Hutchinson. Even the bell-boys are ready to haul up a flag." He preened himself like a bantam cock and closed the book with a bang.

"All that may be true. But if you look in the register you'll find that my friend, who is so indignant that he cannot find his voice, registered as C. G. Crookshanks, as I suppose he always does. The misleading statement as to his being Dr. Crookshanks was given to the clerk by a very

He planted himself in front of Crookshanks. "Have you by any chance ever studied the law?"

good-looking young man who has a gorgeous laugh. I heard him. I was standing at the desk. It was his idea of a practical joke, maybe. But I can't say as to that." And she added, with a smile as cool as an autumn night: "Don't feel that you are bound to stay. I'm sure that you will want to return that book to the library before dinner is announced."

She put her hand on Crookshanks's arm and led him gently away.

Whereat Stitchley, looking shorter than ever but not so perky, took himself off with the book. It had cost four dollars on publication, but was then marked down at two.

"Thank you, Thank you," said Crookshanks. "I said you were Joan of Arc."

"No," she said, "Mary Marbury, of Boston, Mass."

A sudden light dawned on Crookshanks. It was Bob, his only friend, except Mary, who, on the spur of a kind but mistaken moment, had formed this troublesome scheme to kill the Corn Cure laugh. How long would it be before it rippled from the lips of his capable ideal? It would kill him when it came.

He said: "I don't know what to say!"

"But let me tell you what to do. If Bobby Worthing lives near here——"

"He does. At Seal Harbour."

"Walk into the village, then, get a car, drive over to his place——"

"When?" Oh, how about the yawl and the gorgeous afternoons?

"Right away—and when you get there make him telephone to the hotel. Tell him to say that when he called you 'doctor' he made a slight mistake, and ask him to instruct the clerk to have your bags packed and sent across at once. A cheque will be posted to-night to cover the charge for your room. There are yawls at Seal Harbour," she added, with a smile.

"Oh, thank you, thank you," he said.

She had seen his name in the book. Was it conceivable that she, alone among mortals, had never heard of the dreadful meaning that it conveyed to other minds?

She edged him down the steps and out upon the path. "You will join the Worthings at dinner if you hurry," she said. Her hand was so warm in his arm!

In the absence of the inevitable laugh and the old and stale jokes, Crookshanks regained a modicum of that brief confidence. "There are yawls in Seal Harbour, and the sea and the breeze are the same. Will you—could you—shall we say ten o'clock, or any other hour to-morrow—and may I send a car?"

"I have a car," said Mary. "Ten o'clock, then, sharp. Fair and warm to-morrow, with a lovely sailing wind. Good night."

He held her hand in a close grip. He wished to Heaven he had had French blood. He could have lifted it to his lips. To-morrow, at ten o'clock sharp! But he couldn't go under the slightest shade of deception. He had waited so long to find her and she was far too good for that.

He pulled himself together and swallowed something hard. She felt the sudden tremble in his hand. "I feel that I must tell you—that the initials against my name stand for—Charles G., as those of my father did."

"I know. But I think you'd better hurry. You'll be late for the soup."

And still there was no laugh!

"But I feel that I ought to tell you—to be perfectly honest and fair—that—that I am the—the Cosmic Cor—Cor——"

Her fingers became warmer than ever in his hand.

"I know," she said, with a smile in which there was gratitude. "That's why I came to your rescue. That's why I like you so much. One good turn deserves another, you know. I'm wearing one of them now."

THE ART OF DISGUISE

By CLAUDE F. LUKE

AN interesting discussion arose at the Club the other night on the question of disguise. It was opened by a young actor who referred to the difficulty he was experiencing in sustaining the cracked voice of an elderly character throughout a three-act play, remarking that of the many pitfalls that beset the path of the character actor, that of the voice is the least easily avoided. From that the conversation became general, until one man who edits an illustrated weekly paper spoke half humorously, half in earnest, of the assistance rendered by the illustrated press in the cause of law and order.

"If Bill Smith of, say, Wapping, happens to shoot his wife," he began, "he has only to move to the next borough to start life as a new entity, his past as completely effaced as if he had been re-born. He is among the Great Un-photographed. It is not until the police have secured a portrait of him—often a difficult matter with a poor man who is not an habitual criminal—that his face is known to the world. But at the other end of the social scale, I maintain that the illustrated papers are a power for good. They are a deterrent to crime among the upper ten. Suppose, for example, that Lenglen suddenly seized a racket and brained C. B. Cochran, or that Lloyd George in a moment of Celtic enthusiasm stabbed the Speaker; how do you imagine they would evade capture for so much as an hour?

"Famous actors, politicians, authors, society folk, any, in fact, who have danced their way through the pictorial papers have, by such publicity, given a hostage to virtue. With them the path of glory leads but to the photographer, and by the ceaseless treading of that path, aided by popular artists and cartoonists, their clothes, bearing, face, gestures even, are known as well to the remotest reader as to their closest friend. All the disguises in the world would not conceal them. If the Prince of Wales donned the garb of a docker, a policeman, or a navvy, I would wager that he would be spotted in a minute, and if Austen Chamberlain grew a moustache and smashed his monocle, there would still remain the unalterable features, the thin nose and high cheek-bones, and that lofty air of English breeding that make him such a boon to Continental cartoonists, to proclaim his identity to everyone he met."

The Prince of Wales.

"Let him grow a beard, Imperial fashion, and a heavy moustache, clothe himself in a morning suit with a top-hat, and he could enter any Embassy in Europe without recognition."

There was, we agreed, a modicum of truth in his lively statement. It would indeed be difficult, we imagined, for a Lenglen or a Chamberlain successfully to disguise their much-photographed features. And yet——

"That is hardly correct," put in a heavily-moustached man who had followed the conversation with quiet attention. The speaker was Mr. Harry Ashton-Wolfe, a former associate of the

famous Bertillon, and an expert at make-up, whose true stories of the Parisian underworld have long since introduced him to readers of THE STRAND.

"It all depends on whether you are dealing with English celebrities or with those on the Continent. In this country I can think of no person who, with intelligent disguise and the necessary histrionic ability, could not pass unrecognized in the street, club, or even in his own family circle.

"Take the two cases mentioned by our friend. If Lenglen and Lloyd George had reason to discard their identities to escape the police, a skilful alteration of their well-known characteristics would probably assure them freedom for many months, not because the British police are inefficient, but because the study of physiognomy does not play so important a part here as it does in, say, the French police force.

How Sir Austen Chamberlain might disguise himself.

"If a murder or robbery occurs in England, Scotland Yard has an excellent method of arriving at the facts and identity of the culprit, first as the result of an extensive knowledge of the criminal classes and the movements of individual suspects, and also by means of a body of informers, members of the underworld, who, for spite, jealousy, or in the hope of a reward, supply the police with the necessary details. The general high standard of criminal detection in this country speaks for the efficacy of this system; but it has one serious weakness. It breaks down when a crime is committed spontaneously by one who is 'not known to the police.' It is only left for such person to don a suitable disguise, and the police may spend months looking for a criminal of whose very appearance they are ignorant.

"In France, however, the police system is framed to cancel the effect of any possible disguise. When a French detective is searching for a criminal he looks for certain features which he knows will shine through the heaviest disguise. He is aware that a wanted man has a nose that belongs to one of four hundred and fifty different types; that his eyebrows, eyes, ears, and mouth are all similarly peculiar to himself. In short, the French detective is trained to look past beards and moustaches, and concentrate on the essential facial structure that lies behind."

At this point I ventured to raise the question of the facial doctor. In these days when, in the hands of an able surgeon, one's face can be made to assume a hundred aspects, when wrinkles can be smoothed away, crooked noses straightened, and even the bony structure modified, was it not possible that an up-to-date "crook" so treated could negative even the scientific records of the Sûreté?

"It is possible so far," admitted Mr. Ashton-Wolfe; "in fact, an instance is on record. You may recall the case of Carouy, a member of the notorious Bonnot gang of motor bandits. The Parisian police thought they had an easy task to apprehend him, for his *portrait parlé*, the official picture with all his features numbered and classified, showed him to possess extremely small eyes.

"And so, for several fruitless months, they concentrated on small-eyed men, ignoring any possible use of false wigs or moustaches. The eyes alone were sufficient to betray Carouy. But Carouy had recognized this as well as they, and had actually persuaded a friend *to split the skin at the corner of each eye*, thus adding at least a quarter of an inch to its length. In this way he eluded capture for many months, though on several occasions his pursuers had scrutinized him closely.

"All of which only strengthens my argument that British celebrities would find it comparatively easy to conceal with disguises an identity whose features are not classified with the same minuteness of detail as in France."

I then handed him a copy of an illustrated society and theatrical journal and asked him to suggest possible disguises for any of the well-known people whose photographs appeared therein.

"Well, then, here is a photograph of the Prince of Wales. It would be useless for one of his position and breeding to attempt any extreme *rôle*, such as that of a labourer. His manners and bearing would be too

firmly ingrained to be shed at a moment's notice. He would therefore have to keep to a character moving in circles not far removed from his own. I would suggest that the Prince might well play the part of a bearded diplomat. His features are those of his grandfather. Let him grow a beard, Imperial fashion, and a heavy moustache, clothe himself in a morning suit with a top-hat, and he could enter any Embassy in Europe without recognition. The question of real hair is of great importance. Rarely can a beard deceive a close observer. In the days when my work took me among the Apache class, I invariably allowed my side whiskers to grow, and then curled them towards my nose in the approved fashion."

AN unusual photograph of Bernard Shaw in a Trilby hat and a neat lounge suit was next discussed. If ever Mr. Shaw finds his position as High Priest of the Shavian Creed an irksome job, and attempts to evade his followers by adopting disguise, he will discover that his eyes will yet proclaim him. The deep furrows in his cheeks, legacies of much laughter, will also need removal, while, try as he may, he can never alter his tell-tale facial angle. This is a physical trait closely studied in France, where it is recognized that the angle made by lines drawn from forehead to chin, and from the chin to the back of the head, differ in every individual. A person's nationality can be deduced in this way. Mr. Shaw's facial angle is one of almost forty-five degrees, the face being perpendicular to the slope from chin to ear. The straight ear, with its loose lobe, said to denote more than ordinary intelligence, is another unalterable characteristic.

In short, Mr. Shaw would have an exceptionally thin time if he wished to evade by disguise the attentions of admirers who had adoringly memorized his features, or of the police who, from less hallowed motives, had recorded each twist and turn of the Shavian countenance. But for an unobservant public an effective disguise could easily be assumed, one, however, that would entail certain heavy sacrifices. We agreed that if G. B. S. modified his beard to Imperial proportions, clipped and waxed his moustache, turned his eyebrows downwards, borrowed Chamberlain's monocle, and sported a pointed top-hat, his neighbours at Whitehall Court would pass him without the customary genuflexions, and even in his old Adelphi Terrace residents would merely wonder as to the identity of the distinguished-looking French dandy! Alternatively, it was suggested by one of us who sees much of the "huntin', shootin', and ridin'" fraternity that, with certain modifications, Shaw's face had many characteristics in common with gentry of the field; that if he was clean-shaven, and attired in a velvet hunting cap, a velvet-collared riding habit, and a silken cravat, he would be the outward twin of a certain master of foxhounds. This must surely come as a bitter blow to one who, in "Who's Who," describes his recreations as "anything except sport"!

"Austen Chamberlain's face is an interesting type," continued Mr. Ashton-Wolfe. "For him I would not advise any hirsute adornment, but merely an inversion of his present characteristics. First, of course—no monocle. Then his thin nose, typical of the British aristocrat, could be broadened by means of nostril pads, and by the same means his ascetic face with the high cheek-bones and sunken cheeks could be made to appear positively 'full blown.' If, in addition, the corners of his mouth were made to turn upwards, instead of drooping as they now do—this again by means of a small pad inserted between the lower front teeth and the lip—his entire face would be altered beyond recognition.

"Here's one of Churchill," he went on; "an easy subject, a face crying out to be disguised! The opposite treatment suggested for Chamberlain would suffice for Churchill. His round face could be deflated by pads inside the cheeks which grip and suck the flesh inwards. His wide nose could be similarly treated. Let him add a toothbrush moustache — home-grown for preference—and Churchill at once becomes a German business magnate or a member of the Reichstag—a Teuton, anyway!

Mr. Bernard Shaw.

"If clean-shaven, and attired in a velvet hunting cap, a velvet-collared riding habit, and a silken cravat, he would be the outward twin of a certain master of foxhounds."

"And Lloyd George is easy enough. Give him a good close haircut, or make him bald even, lengthen his moustache into the 'Walrus' or 'Ole Bill' style, take off that familiar Gladstone collar and replace it with a soft one, and the gallant little Welshman would pass as one of his own beloved miners! Alternatively, he might well don a policeman's uniform—as he did once before with such marked success." This, of course, was a sly reference to the occasion after the Peace Meeting at Birmingham, when an infuriated crowd would have assuredly lynched the outspoken little man had he not escaped in the uniform of a friendly constable.

Mr. Winston Churchill
"becomes a German business magnate or a member of the Reichstag."

HERE, however, one of us who spends his days in the Press Gallery of the House of Commons raised an objection. He said that however heavily Lloyd George might veil his features, anyone who knew him at all intimately would instantly recognize two unalterable characteristics — to wit, his speech and his walk.

"But they are not unalterable," suavely countered Mr. Ashton-Wolfe. "Anything that changes the volume of the cavity of the mouth must alter the acoustics. A piece of wax kept in the dome will entirely change the tone of voice. Personally, I have often used two sucker pads attached to either cheek and joined with thin elastic passing above and below the tongue, restricting its movements and causing clipped speech."

(Our young actor friend who had started the present discussion bore this out by stating that for stage purposes a voice can be altered by means of "plumpers"—usually a fig cut in half and a piece placed in either cheek.)

"I agree, however, that the walk presents a difficulty. Every man walks differently, a fact that the police recognize and employ with advantage. It is no use merely setting out to alter one's walk by taking longer or shorter strides; sooner or later the mind will cease to exert control, and the normal gait will be assumed. But there *are* ways, of course. There was the case, for example, of Dupuez, an unusual combination of housebreaker and confidence trickster. He was slightly knock-kneed, walking like a bird with short, mincing steps. When he was being sought by the police he knew that his walk would immediately betray him, so he tucked a small cushion between his legs inside his nether garments, which forced him willy-nilly to adopt the rolling gait of a sailor, and for a long time put the police off his trail."

On the next page appeared a head and shoulder portrait of Sir Gerald du Maurier, and at the sight of it Mr. Ashton-Wolfe pursed his lips and wrinkled his forehead.

"This is a teaser," he exclaimed; "his features are so remarkable as to be almost beyond successful disguise. Du Maurier provides the curious combination of a head with a British chin, and with all other features unmistakably Oriental. With a drooping moustache, straightened eyebrows, and compressed lips, he would make a passable Chinaman."

He then lighted upon a pair of photographs showing Charles Chaplin in film garb and in ordinary life. It was agreed that for a stage disguise, his was ideally simple. A moustache and a funny walk completely concealed the real Charlie.

"And talking of Chaplin," he continued, "can't you see the resemblance in features between him and Suzanne Lenglen? With a close fuzzy shingle and a black toothbrush moustache, the vivacious tennis player would deceive the hardest of hard-boiled film fans. Seriously, though, she has the same eyes, nose, mouth, and teeth as the comedian, and there is little difference in the shape of the head.

"But with women the subject of disguise is always distasteful. Very few feminine crooks resort to it—and this for several reasons. If they wear wigs they must use those large enough to cover their own hair, a risky procedure. But, above all, the average woman hates to make herself ugly, and with certain types this is the only way to successful disguise. Look, for instance, at this photograph of Lady Diana Duff Cooper, a beautiful woman, with fine patrician features, but with no definite characteristic on which to base a disguise. Her only means would be to sacrifice her looks and play the *rôle* of a slum girl, preferably with a blind patch, a stooping gait, and clad in filthy rags."

With a few deft touches Mlle. Suzanne **Lenglen could easily pass for Mr. Charles Chaplin.**

The Duchess of York, we agreed, for the same reason, is not a good subject for disguise, though it was suggested that because of her Gallic features she would, in appropriate attire, make a charming French midinette.

The subject of this discussion still ran in my head the following day, and when I chanced on Sir Gerald du Maurier, I asked him what disguise he would adopt if circumstances forced him to do so. His words were a surprise, echoing as they did the opinion of Mr. Ashton-Wolfe.

Once in the long ago, for a wager, I stood for three hours outside a Bond Street tea-shop dressed in the blue tunic of a Chinese sandwich-man, advertising the refreshing beverage to be obtained inside. Scores of friends passed without so much as a glance at the poor wretch in the gutter! That, I suppose, was successful. But I think I could do better either as a postman with a little grey moustache, or as a beautiful young lady of fashion leading a handsome Borzois or Alsatian!"

All who were at the Theatrical Garden Party last year will recall Sir Gerald's admirable impersonation of a Society woman. When he first appeared doing fussy little things with a vanity bag, a woman near me breathed: "Lady Oxford!" Nor was it a bad shot! I marvelled at the time at the ease with which Sir Gerald manipulated his high-heeled shoes. I have since had it from One Who Should Know that the actor-knight can get away with these feminine *rôles* on account of his slim legs!

NEXT I sought out the Man with Many Faces, Mr. Moore Marriott, an authority on make-up for the films. I saw him first as he appears in Fig. 1, a smiling young man, with dark wavy hair, and it was not until I had broached the subject of my call that he casually remarked: "You would not guess, I suppose, that at this moment you are not addressing the real Marriott?" and with a deft flick he removed the unsuspected *toupée* and became himself, as shown in Fig. 2. Repressing a natural desire to test by force the genuineness of his nose, ears, and cheeks, I asked him to disguise himself so that I could observe the entire crafty business at each stage.

He complied with alacrity. From a small attaché-case, his entire make-up "wardrobe," he took a towel, a hand-mirror, a 6B "Venus" pencil, several wigs, three sets of false teeth, one or two old tins, a length of crêpe hair, and a muffler.

Removing his collar and tie, he set about converting his pleasant features into those of a singularly repulsive ruffian. First he ruffled his scanty hair and dusted it with white powder. "Ordinary cornflour at three-ha'pence a tin," he explained. With a stick of No. 2 grease-paint he lightly coloured his eyebrows to approximately the dingy grey of his hair. Knotting a gaudy muffler about his neck, he remarked that this one item of apparel will make a dustman of the most cerulean-blooded nobleman.

Lady Diana Duff Cooper.

"Her only means of disguise would be to sacrifice her looks and play the rôle of a slum girl."

"The mouth next," he continued; "it is the most important feature. If I were a C.I.D. man I should have all my teeth out to leave room for false ones! In fact, I had to do this with four of mine for a certain film. Incidentally, I have eight sets of teeth and sixteen wigs."

He then proceeded to insert a row of false teeth, several of them missing, and the rest yellow and decayed. The set, which was purposely too large for his mouth, forced out the lower lip to form an admirable and permanent leer. He has also found to advantage that a large set induces a useful lisp.

Next he took a plaited length of grey crêpe hair. Combing out an inch or two at one end he dipped the frayed hairs into boiling water and ironed them flat. With a small brush he moistened his upper lip with white hard varnish and applied an inch of the flat hair which he had cut from the ironed strip. A few brisk snips with the scissors and he achieved a scrubby moustache whose genuineness would have passed unquestioned at a yard's range. Each hair seemed to have its root in the flesh.

In this disguise Sir Gerald du Maurier once stood for three hours outside a Bond Street tea-shop.

The 6B pencil was next used to accentuate lines about the mouth, eyes, and nose.

"This is the only part of the disguise that would not stand the closest inspection," he said. "For a real-life disguise I should dispense with it, for I can go for hours with my face contorted in natural furrows.

"For film work, however, shading is important. I often spend hours at the Academy studying the paintings. From a distance I see the effect I am after, and then I closely scrutinize the picture to discover what tricks of light and shade have been used to achieve it."

With a final artistic flourish he stroked his chin with a piece of burnt cork, and a moment later stepped back the man you see in Fig. 3 (hurriedly I put my watch out of sight and edged near the door!). A comparison of Figs. 3 and 4 will demonstrate how potent is the combined effect of costume and a closed mouth.

MR. MARRIOTT agreed that mere facial disguise is not enough, and showed how the all-important walk can be entirely altered by wearing ill-fitting footwear. For a recent film he played for days with a large stone in his shoe to create a natural limp. It did! He limped for several days after the film was finished! Then I noticed that the little finger of his left hand was permanently crooked—a war relic. Were he a "wanted" man he would keep that hand permanently closed, a position in which the deformed joint would rest naturally.

Before I left him he told me something which I dread to believe. If it is true, I shall never again be able to attend a fashionable party with a straight face.

"Talking of plumpers," he said, "do you know that they are habitually worn by many Society women?"

Well—I mean, fancy seeing your dinner partner's nicely-rounded face suddenly dissolve into something angular and bony just because she has accidentally swallowed her plumpers! A terrible prospect.

The same afternoon I rounded off an amusing day by taking tea with Willy Clarkson of "Wigs by Clarkson" fame. I considered that the man who sold Charlie Peace his beard should have something pertinent to say, and so it proved.

"The essence of disguise," he said, "is to exaggerate weak characteristics and minimize the strong ones. White-faced people should apply liquid sunburn, the sort of thing that was used for the characters in 'Chu Chin Chow' and 'Aloma,' to give them a tanned effect. Skimpy eyebrows should be artificially lengthened, and long ones clipped. A person with perfect sight should wear glasses, the faintest bit smoked. Too much, and they become noticeable, which is the unforgivable sin in any disguise.

Mr. Moore Marriott, an authority on make-up for the films.
(1) As a smiling young man. (2) As himself.

One who habitually wears glasses should, by the same reasoning, discard them. If a person is thin he should pad his stomach *only slightly*. Stout men, on the other hand, who desire to appear slim, should avoid close-fitting jackets, but should tighten up their undergarments, trousers, waistcoat, and so on; otherwise the skin-tight jacket will advertise the man's intention.

(3) As a repulsive ruffian.

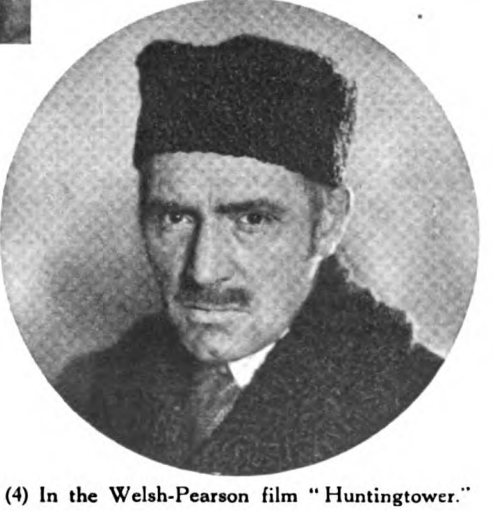
"Above all one should beware of one's back. It is a priceless means of identification. This can be altered by means of a thick towel tied to the braces. In the same way the walk can be changed by wearing rubber heels, and with rubber pads inside the shoes; these also add at least an inch to one's height."

Mr. Clarkson is, of course, enthusiastic on the subject of wigs. He wisely stipulates, however, that real hair should be brushed over the end of the wig so that no straight edge betrays its presence. For this reason a wig should never reach the bottom of the neck. Also false wigs and beards should be slightly fairer than the real hair. Beards should at all times be unobtrusive.

For the celebrities already analyzed, he made several expert suggestions. Thus Shaw, he said, should part his beard, Tirpitz fashion, dye it a chestnut brown, and wear slightly tinted glasses; Chamberlain should dampen his hair so that it hangs limply on his forehead, and grow a moustache; while Lloyd George would do well to grow a beard, alter his back view, and adopt *vice versâ* colouring; Winston's high forehead could be hidden by a *toupée* such as are worn—I have Clarkson's word for it!—by thousands of elderly men to-day.

Most of the other people I mentioned have already "gone to Clarkson," though not with criminal intent. He supplied wigs and costumes for the Ruthven twins when, as Rose and Lily, they appeared in "Alice in Wonderland." He rendered similar service to Lady Oxford when she appeared as Queen Elizabeth at an Oxford pageant, and to Lady Diana Duff Cooper for her *rôle* as the Virgin.

For the Duchess of Sutherland's last ball, Clarkson was commissioned to prepare a disguise for the Prince of Wales. He attended at the Palace,



(4) In the Welsh-Pearson film "Huntingtower."

and saw the Prince leave for the ball clad as a splendid Arab, bearded, moustached, and with a bronzed complexion. Word soon leaked out as to the Prince's disguise, whereupon, half-way through the ball, the distinguished Arab raced back to the Palace, where Clarkson awaited him. He returned as a completely different character, while another man donned his Arab costume. Thus the Prince had the enjoyable experience of being left alone while his "double" was pointed out as His Royal Highness!

Clarkson is the Supreme Deity of Raggers. It was to him that those immortal Cambridge students came to prepare themselves for one of the most successful japes in history. They left Wardour Street in taxi-cabs, one of them in the garb of the Sultan of Zanzibar, and the rest as his swarthy and heavily-jewelled retinue. A wire was dispatched to the Mayor and Corporation of Cambridge, who met them in full civic regalia at the station, where there followed much knee bending, and many fulsome speeches and loud huzzas, until the elated students made a regal retreat, their plot working throughout without the slightest hitch!

Mr. Clarkson recalls as one of the best specimens of stage disguise he has ever seen that of Yvonne Printemps, the talented wife of Sacha Guitry, who, in a French revue, gave a wonderful impersonation of the Prince of Wales, her thick hair cunningly coiled and parted. Though, of his own successes, he must surely remember proudly the occasion when, many years ago, he disguised a famous actress, then the rage of the town, who for a wager sold violets for several hours outside Marlborough House, and was never once questioned, though her photographs sold by the million, even by the flower girls whose pitch she had shared!

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 172.

WHEN bivalves beautified a garden fair,
What other lovely ornaments were there?

1. Two parallels across two parallels—
A little higher up, the signal tells.

2. Find mountain in a certain island, and
Your thoughts may turn at once to Babyland.

3. Of prayerful past present equivalent,
What careless days in happy youth we spent!

4. Where coins are found in corners, this is heard,
Folks find it comes, a not uncommon word.

5. Fellow whose name among the great is writ;
'Tis almost always shortened down a bit.

6. As tree and soldier 'tis to England known;
Here the French name two letters must disown.

7. Hence came the sign to murderer accurst:
Adam and Eve would seem to be reversed.

8. The purple vest with decent care disposed,
The silver ring she pull'd, the door reclosed.

9. Here was a mighty slaughter, grim and great.
Twenty years on, how sad the victor's fate!

10. Should poem headless headless poet meet,
Left-handed writer would be incomplete.

11. Curls? 'Tis not so, unless we judge by sound
The colleague's name within a foot is found.

PAX.

Answers to Acrostic No. 172 *should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor,* THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on November* 10*th.*

Two answers may be sent to every light.

It is essential that solvers, with their answers to this acrostic, should send also their real names and addresses.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 171.

TWO sees adjoin: for *one* and *two*
Richard and Swithun are your clue.

1. For lunar leaping won a fabled fame.
2. From royal motto learn the French for "shame."
3. I gobble up your eggs, poor crocodile.
4. Language of ancient dwellers by the Nile.
5. A drug consumed upon a drowsy bed.
6. In greeting cardinals the word is said.
7. Here Persian king counted his ships below.
8. To the Apocrypha for this you go.
9. Expositor with four-fold *ease* descried.
10. To world and gun alike may be applied.

KING COLE.

1. C	o	W
2. H	on	I
3. I	chneumo	N
4. C	opti	C
5. H	ashis	H
6. E	mlnenc	E
7. S	alami	S
8. T	obi	T
9. E	xeget	E
10. R	evolve	R

Two of Those Women

By

STACY AUMONIER

Illustrated by
J. DEWAR MILLS

WHEN travelling on the Continent one must always be impressed, I think, by curious types of Englishwomen whom one never sees in their own country. Very often they are middle-aged or quite elderly, and they go about singly, or in pairs, or sometimes in a party of three or four. There is something terribly pathetic in their demeanour, particularly when one recognizes the fact that they are not tourists, but hotel *habituées*. For there is a great difference. The tourist is there temporarily for pleasure or sightseeing, but the hotel *habituée* is a permanent, tragic, and often inexplicable figure. All over the South of France and Italy there are thousands of these women staying at pensions and small hotels, drifting from place to place, rudderless, unwanted, and patently unhappy. They have the atmosphere of exiles, as of people who have committed some crime in their own country, and dare not return. And in many cases the crime that they have committed is, I suspect, the unpardonable crime of poverty. Although they may assume a perfunctory interest in the life and activities of the place of their sojourn, I have noticed that their chief concern is invariably the mail from England.

THE story that I am going to tell is about two such women, and if I appear as a rather unscrupulous eavesdropper, you must please understand that I was a very unwilling one.

The accommodation in the little Hôtel Beau-sejour at Antibes is very limited. I was trying to write something at the only writing-table in the lounge, when two of these women came along and seated themselves opposite me.

I don't know what your powers of concentration are, but personally whenever I hear people talking I am bound to listen to what they say, however banal and trivial it may be. On this occasion I did try to concentrate for a time, but their conversation soon usurped my entire attention.

One woman was about sixty, the other could hardly have been thirty, and they were obviously strangers to each other. But they had one thing in common. It might be called a kind of soul-weariness. Both were tired, tired and bored, existing only in reminiscences. And it became very apparent that neither wanted to listen to the other. The old lady wanted to talk about her son. The younger one wanted to talk about some other man, and having missed the opening sentences I could not gather at first whether it was her brother, her lover, or her husband.

" I shall never forget the pranks he used to play at Bolsover House School," the elder woman was saying. " There was a Euclid and gymnastic master there none of the boys liked . . . what was his name? I have forgotten. And there was a Miss Beaswyck, the matron, a very prim and severe person, who always wore black kid gloves. One day she annoyed Georgie very much. I have forgotten why. And Mr. Raynes—yes, that was his name, funny how it comes to you when you're telling a story, and not trying to remember—well, he had punished Georgie for not doing his home work. When Mr. Raynes went to bed that night he found Miss Beaswyck's black kid gloves, filled with cold porridge, in his bed. And Miss Beaswyck found Mr. Raynes's boxing gloves filled with cold porridge in *her* bed. Oh, dear! there was a to-do!"

" Really! how amusing!" said the younger woman, without enthusiasm. "Well, it happened in the very early spring——"

" Of course, where Georgie was so splendid was, he confessed. He confessed simply

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because the master suspected one of the other boys, and although nothing could be proved, he couldn't bear the idea of the other boy living under this eternal stigma."

"Quite right," said the younger woman. "There are so few people with any sense of altruism. Now when I first met Peter, I was coming off duty at the base hospital at Amiens. We had had a terrible thirty-six hours. I was feeling awful—done up and finished. I must have looked awful. It was just after dawn. In the courtyard I suddenly felt my knees sagging. I was talking to an orderly, when I heard a voice say, 'Can't you see she's going to faint?' Before I did faint, I just had time to glimpse a pair of deep blue eyes, and the kindest face I have ever seen. He carried me somewhere. He never asked my name. He just did the kind thing and went away——"

"Ah, yes, my dear, there were some wonderful men in the War. Some vile, some sublime. My son, for instance. Ah, yes, we women—we women—— It was wicked of me, I suppose, but oh, how I used to pray that it would be over before my Georgie came of age! Oh, why couldn't they have come to some arrangement!"

"I know. I believe we women who—who had someone in it we loved all felt that. Of course, I did see him again; otherwise I shouldn't be telling you all this."

The elder woman uttered a deep sigh.

"We were so helpless, though. Georgie never told me. He joined up a year before he was qualified, as a *private*, mind you! a private! and to think that my uncle commanded a brigade in the South African War! Of course he was such a splendid boy. He stood nearly six feet when he was eighteen. He looked every inch an officer even in his Tommy's uniform. A lot of the others used instinctively to call him 'Sir.' He wrote me such lovely letters, so cheerful, so gay, even when he was down with fever in those dreadful swamps in Greece. He used to write home about—oh, about everything except the war."

"Yes, yes," said the younger woman, wearily. "I met Peter a few days later quite by chance in a narrow street near the railway station. He walked straight up to me and gravely asked me how I was. I was amazed that he remembered me. He looked, in the curious outfit they used to wear in the trenches, like one of those mediæval knights. He told me he was going up to the front line in two hours' time. We had only a few hurried words, and then he went."

The elder woman clicked her tongue with what was meant to be a display of sympathy and interest, but her aged and short-sighted eyes were elsewhere.

"Games! that was what he was so good at. Cricket, football, all those things. They said there were several colleges at both Oxford and Cambridge anxious to have him because he cound run a hundred yards in—ten minutes, was it?—and he could knock anybody over at football. And yet the wonderful thing was, he was so gentle with it all. He wouldn't hurt a fly if he could help it. Of course, he got his commission, my dear, did I tell you?"

I SAW on the face of the younger woman a sudden expression of utter disgust and annoyance. She was, I am sure, thinking: "Oh, you tedious old fool! What do I care about your ridiculous son? Don't you understand I'm trying to tell you about Peter. Peter! you know, my Peter, the most wonderful person in the world."

The old lady was continuing:—

"It seems strange to me, my dear, that after all these years, that part of it seems unreal. I can remember very little about it. Nothing at all about names and places and regiments and all those things. It was just a terrible nightmare coming between me and Georgie. When I think of him it is always of him when he was a baby or a boy."

The expression of the younger woman suggested: What was the interest of a baby and a schoolboy compared with the interest of a young man in the first flush of virile manhood? She fidgeted in her chair, and there was a silence. The two of them seemed to fall apart and forget each other. After a pause they drifted together again like migratory birds on a long flight. Strangely enough, it was the elder woman who seemed first conscious of their need for some kind of communion. Perhaps her conscience stabbed her that she had occupied too much of the conversation. She said hesitatingly:—

"Did you marry this—did you marry the young man, my dear?"

It was evident that the question moved the younger woman profoundly.

She put her hand to her throat, and whispered almost inaudibly:—

"No."

Then, controlling herself with an effort, she continued:—

"No, no, no. But you may guess the reason."

"He was killed?"

The younger woman shook her head and, her voice shaking with tears, said:—

"I do not know. In the war it was so easy to lose touch with people. We only met four times. But he swore that he loved me at our last meeting. God knows I loved him. Soon after he went I developed typhoid fever. I was terribly ill and sent to England.

"Before I did faint, I just had time to glimpse a pair of deep blue eyes, and the kindest face I have ever seen."

When I recovered I could find no trace of him. Whether he had been killed or sent to another front, perhaps killed there, perhaps married to someone else . . . . I don't know, I tell you, I don't know. I shall never know. It was more than ten years ago this coming April, when the chestnut trees were blossoming along the banks of the canal . . . . I was only a girl then . . . . oh, my God ! "

She was trembling from the effect of this little outbreak, but in the pause she seemed to realize that it was she who had been monopolizing the conversation. It was comforting to have *anyone* to tell all this to, you could see. And, after all, the poor old lady had lost her son. Could it be as terrible to lose a son as a lover ? Controlling herself she said :—

" Where was your boy killed ? "

The older woman was apparently reacting to this emotional display. Her eyes were fixed on the ground, and her tongue was beating a little tattoo between her lips. She did not answer the question.

" That dreadful uncertainty ! " she suddenly exclaimed, " how it has eaten me up. Men have never quite known what it means. Why do they have these wars ? Why can't they come to some arrangement, I say ? You are young, my dear. You may yet have a son, and pour out all your substance into making him a man. And when he has arrived at that——"

She shrugged her shoulders helplessly, and the younger woman said :—

" No, I shall never have a son. I could never, never, love anyone but Peter."

IT was quite apparent that during the last few minutes the women had been drawn more closely together. A link was formed by their common grief. Neither of them was any longer entirely preoccupied with her individual trouble. The younger woman repeated her question :—

" Where was your boy killed, Mrs.—er——"

In her effort to appear interested she was handicapped by not knowing her companion's name, and she plainly did not like to address her as she herself was addressed as " my dear." What did it matter ? They had drifted together, as they would drift apart. A name or a term meant nothing. Then the elder woman made a remark which surprised me.

" My son was not killed. He is still alive."

I think this interested me more than it did the younger woman. Indeed, her brow puckered into a little perplexed frown, as though she thought that the other had not been quite playing the game. Why all this extravagant grief if she had not lost the boy after all ? What was the old woman making this fuss about ? The latter was continuing :—

" He was captured by the Turks, you know. Did I tell you ? Was it the Turks or the Arabs ? Some of those dark people, anyway over there."

She made a vague gesture in the direction of the North Pole.

" Georgie was two and a half years in one of their foul prisons. Ah ! how vile it is that a man should be sent to prison for merely serving his country ! Oh, and the conditions of it, the misery, the torture, the anguish ! No, I think for part of the time it was a Russian prison. I can't remember all that. I was so distracted. He lost an eye a leg, and memory to a large extent. He had fever, I know. He hardly told us anything. And when in the end he came back everything about him seemed to be lost. All his youth, and spirits. He hardly seemed to remember or care for me. Before he went out he was engaged to Millicent Brander our vicar's daughter, as nice a girl as you could wish to meet. He would have nothing to do with her. And she was quite willing to marry him in spite of his missing eye, and leg, and memory. In delirious moments he swore he loved some other woman he had met on the Continent. I'm not sure it wasn't other women—vague names he mumbled. Absurd, of course, it all was. The doctors tried to persuade me that he would get right. He was chock-full of illusions and panics. But eight years have passed, and he is little better. He takes little interest in anything except carpentry and flowers, and keeping bees."

" Where does he live ? "

" At present he is in Switzerland. Someone persuaded me, I've forgotten who. He's staying with one of these new German doctors they make so much fuss about these days. You know, what do they call it ? men who treat the mind. I don't believe in it, but he might as well be there as anywhere. Oh, yes, I believe it was my brother who persuaded me, and he is a doctor himself. A qualified medical man, but he dabbles in this other business. But why should I distress you, my dear, with all this ? I'm an old fool, I know. Tell me more about your—Stephen, wasn't it ? What is he like ? "

The younger woman heaved a deep sigh. I could see that she considered the story unsatisfactory and inconclusive. Then as though relieved to turn to a more congenial subject, she said :—

" Peter ? oh, Peter. " A long pause. " He had deep blue eyes, very wide apart, a square chin, clean shaven. He was tall and strong, and there was a kind of—kind of elasticity about him. Elastic in mind and

"Did you marry this—did you marry the young man, my dear?"

body. Beneath the gay exterior you were conscious of something profound and strong."

The elder woman's interest appeared vaguely aroused.

"But," she said, "didn't you—didn't you inquire at the War Office? The Records Office, wasn't it?—they knew pretty well."

"That was the absurd part about it. I—we——" a girlish blush came to the younger woman's face. "You see, well, when we first met it was just a flirtation. I christened him Peter. He made up a name for me. Life was so unreal in those days. Death seemed to be the only reality. What did it matter what we were called, who we were, or, for that matter, what we did? Oh, yes—we did flirt. We had lovely times together. It was not till that last meeting when we both realized that the thing had gone far—become very serious. Just before he was leaving when it dawned upon us that

neither knew the other's real name, and we had of course promised to correspond! There were other officers at the station, and he took out a card, scribbled his address on it, and thrust it into my hand. I didn't look at it, but slipped it into my purse. When I got back to the hospital the purse had disappeared! He had gone and I did not even know his name! So absorbed had we been with all the foolish little things that people like us talk about—you've no idea how in those days we conspired together, men and women, to ignore the war—I did not even know his regiment. I only knew that he was in the heavy artillery."

"Heavy artillery," repeated the elder woman, dully.

"Three days later I developed my fever. Oh, I'm not sure—I was so worried—I think the fever started before—I nearly went out of my mind."

"You are sure it was the *heavy* artillery?" said the elder woman.

The younger one dabbed her nose and nodded. Both seemed to have fallen apart once more. The elder appeared to be ruminating. As though to herself she muttered, "These German doctors say that there is only one thing that could cure my Georgie—but suppose——"

She took off her spectacles, wiped them, and regarded the other with the impaired vision of her naked sight, as though by this means she could observe something, unobserved herself.

"What was the pet name he called you, my dear?"

The younger woman appeared to hesitate. This was sacred ground. This old woman had no right to trespass. And yet, after all, she had already said so much. Greedy for sympathy and understanding, she said, in a quiet, clear voice:—

"Little Wind-flower."

The elder woman stood up and faced the window. She was still not wearing her glasses. The girl could not see her face, but I could. And I have never seen a stranger expression on the face of any living creature. Her eyes were wide open, and probably seeing nothing, but to me they seemed to absorb all the phenomena of existence at a glance. They were alight with amazement, doubt, and questioning. She was trembling violently, her lips were shaking, and I quite expected her to swoon. I felt most terribly embarrassed, as though I had stepped into a forbidden sanctuary. I did not know how to act. Neither of the women had taken the slightest notice of me. They had probably been aware of me at first, when the conversation opened so conventionally, but had forgotten me when they began to exchange their profound confidences.

But the elder woman did not swoon. After considerable effort she repeated in a perfectly-controlled voice:—

"Little Wind-flower!

She turned and glanced overtly at the younger, but whether she could see her or not I could not say. Then she sat down, put on and carefully adjusted her spectacles. With a motherly gesture she put her hand on the other's, and said casually:—

"What are your plans, my dear?"

The younger woman shrugged her shoulders, in the manner of one to whom plans have no longer interest or significance.

"Listen, then," said the elder. "Will you do me a favour? I am leaving on Thursday for Lausanne to see my son. Will you come as my companion?"

The younger woman hesitated, and the elder seemed to press her hands harder, and she spoke earnestly, and vehemently:—

"Please do, my dear. I had a companion, and she had to leave because of illness in her family. I don't know what your position is, but I would gladly pay you. I am not badly off. My uncle, the brigadier, left me money last year. Please come! Oh, do please come!"

"You are extremely kind," said the younger woman. "I must think. I—have no plans, but this is—— Oh, please forgive me if I go away and think. It is most generous of you. I have just enough to pig along at these little hotels. But still—please forgive me."

She gave both her companion's hands a tight squeeze and hurried out of the lounge. The old lady removed her spectacles once more. She wiped them with her handkerchief, and again dabbed her eyes. She was entirely oblivious of my presence. Her whole character seemed to have changed. She was still shaking, but it was with a kind of elation. For several minutes she sat there, mumbling to herself. Twice I heard her mutter:—

"Little Wind-flower! Peter, she called him, did she?"

Unaccountable tears clouded her old eyes. Pressing her hand to her temple she whispered hoarsely. "Oh, if it should be——"

She rose very slowly, and appeared to grope her way out of the room.

I SAT there for a long time until it began to get dark.

A waiter came in.

"Shall I turn on the light, monsieur?"

"No, please," I said; "leave it all just as it is."

And I continued to stare at my empty writing-pad.

Two of those women! God forgive me!

The First Wasp of Summer

By EDGAR JEPSON AND HUGH CLEVELY

Illustrated by H. M. BROCK, R.I.

JAMES STARK was a mild young man, though he did not quite look it—there was something about his eye. But from his earliest years mildness had been pressed upon him with an unceasing pressure by the aunt and uncle—especially the aunt—with whom he lived. Finding him mild, his schoolfellows had carried on the good work with enthusiasm; his colleagues in the office of Mr. Atkinson, consulting engineer, in which he worked, had carried it on with no less enthusiasm.

So he had come to the age of twenty-two, easily put upon, among people always ready to put upon him. His aunt and uncle, indeed, had long since ceased to know when they were doing so. But they displayed a sneaking pride in him to their friends, never to his face, as a shining credit to their upbringing, for he was not only mild but a model. He seldom spoke unless spoken to and then never to contradict; he took care of his clothes; he was punctual at meals; when he went out at night he always told them where he was going, and never stayed out late; he never fell into bad company; every Saturday he handed over to his uncle the three-pounds-ten he received from Mr. Atkinson, and received fifteen shillings back for lunches, teas, and pocket-money; he took no interest in young women—a model young man indeed. The only thing his aunt and uncle deplored in him was his appetite. It was hearty.

A model, but lonely, young man he remained till black Friday—his black Friday. It was a cloudlessly sunny day, and he worked well during the morning, peaceful except that Mr. Atkinson grumbled at him unreasonably over an intricate piece of work that he had given him because no one else in the office could do it, and easy, except that Taylor, a colleague, asked him to be a good fellow and lend him a hand with a difficult bit of drawing, and that helping hand cut into his lunch hour; but these were daily happenings which affected him little. It was after lunch that his Friday turned black, and it was quick about it and thorough. He was standing on the kerb waiting for a lull in the Holborn traffic, when the first wasp of summer stung him in the back of the neck. He jumped—forward, unfortunately; the mudguard of an oncoming car caught him on the right thigh and knocked him sprawling into the gutter. In saving his head he grazed his right hand. Several people helped him up; several more paused to see what they were helping up; a policeman arrived with a note-book. James, rather dazed, stood blinking, and a good Samaritan pressed through the group and proudly handed him his bowler hat, which had charged the wheel of a motor omnibus.

The ruin cleared his wits; he could hear his aunt's shrill discourse on the price of hats, his uncle's windy homily on the folly of getting in front of motor-cars. When his wits cleared he found himself the centre of interest of a small but gathering crowd. The lull in the traffic came; blushing and embarrassed, he limped quickly across the road, dropped his hat in the opposite gutter, and on to the office.

The afternoon was endless; the hands of the clock seemed hardly to move; his neck was throbbing; his head and thigh were aching; his grazed hand made but a poor job of the intricate design on which he was at work; Mr. Atkinson came out of the office to grumble at his slowness.

At half-past four Taylor said: "I say, Stark, you might be a good chap and lend me a hand with this difficult bit."

"Too busy," said James, curtly.

Taylor started and gazed at him with astonished, pained eyes. This was against the very course of nature. When you felt too slack to do a thing yourself Stark *always* did it for you. It must be looked into. He rose and crossed the office to look into it, leant over James's drawing, and knocked his bottle of Indian ink all over the drawing and over James's coat and trousers.

James was two seconds grasping the facts that his drawing, his coat, and his trousers were ruined. He rose from his stool, gazed about him wildly, and said: "Oh, damn!"

Taylor fairly gasped. Stark *never* swore.

"Oh, I say, I'm frightfully sorry," he said.

Then James's expression and the patches of ink on his light grey coat and trousers seemed of a sudden immensely funny, and he laughed.

There are limits—even to an inferiority complex. James's eyes blazed as they had never blazed before, and with a considerable swing of his strong right arm he slapped Taylor's face.

Taylor staggered, recovered, raised his hand to his stinging cheek, and gaped at James in injured incredulity. Stark smack his face? Impossible! Had one of Landseer's necessary lions in Trafalgar Square raised a paw and knocked him down he could not have felt more surprised or injured. Then a furious sense of outrage surged through him, and his fist came hard against James's mouth.

"That," he observed, "will teach you to keep your hands off me."

He was wrong. A lonely spirit and six feet of bone and muscle, inflamed by a wasp sting, a bruised thigh, a grazed hand, a crushed hat, and Indian ink, are not so easily taught. In the next few seconds James put his hands on him several times and knocked him across the office, where he came to the ground with a great clatter along with his desk, his stool, and his drawing-board. The door of the inner office flew open and Mr. Atkinson burst in.

He looked from Taylor, feeling a bleeding nose, to James, ignoring a bleeding lip, and cried: "Great heavens! What's this? What ever's this?"

"He smacked my face," said the jarred Taylor, feebly.

"He struck you? Stark struck you?" said Mr. Atkinson, in the amazed and incredulous accents of one flabbergasted. "But this is disgraceful, absolutely disgraceful! What did you strike him for, Stark?"

"He laughed," said James, fiercely

"He laughed and you struck him? Incredible!"

"And I'd do it again," said James, more fiercely.

"He laughed and you hit him—knocked him down? You admit that you knocked him down because he laughed?" said Mr. Atkinson, in yet more incredulous accents.

"That's why I did it. Perhaps it will teach him to be careful how he laughs another time," said James.

Outraged, Mr. Atkinson gasped; then he burst out furiously: "But this is hooliganism—sheer hooliganism! And shameless—quite shameless! Where do you think you are, young man—in a bear garden? Have you no respect for this office—for me?"

James looked at him, the employer he had almost revered; rage and misery cleared his sight, and he saw a pursy little man, with a protruding waistcoat, whose nose was by far the reddest part of his mottled face.

"No," he said frankly.

Mr. Atkinson gasped again. Never, he told himself, had he met with such insolence and ingratitude.

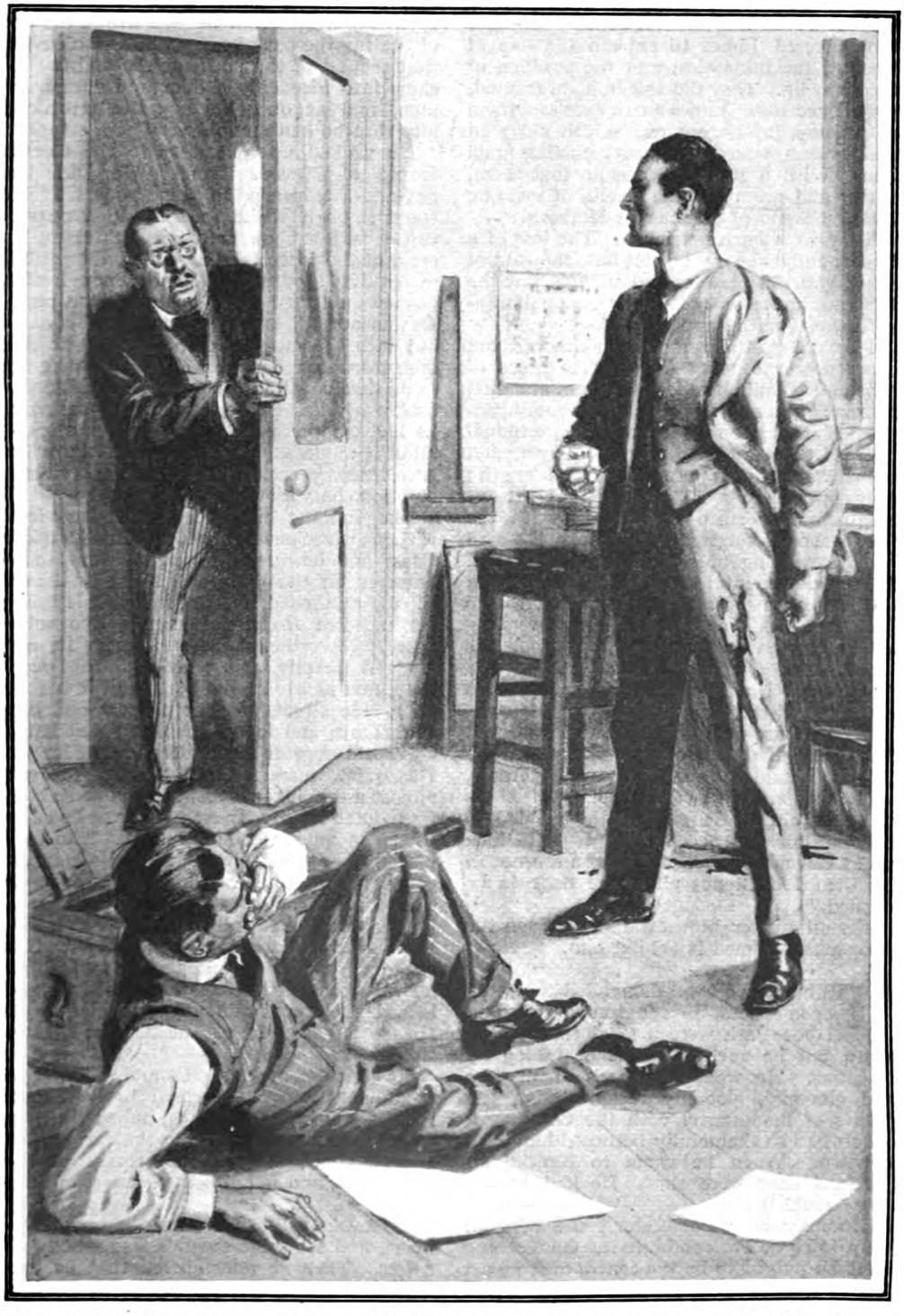
"C-c-clear out!" he stuttered. "C-c-clear out of this office and d-d-don't c-c-come back!"

He could not, at the moment, have made a more alluring suggestion, and without a word James stalked across the office, took his cane, but not, alas, his hat, from its peg, stalked out of the door and slammed it behind him. Mr. Atkinson's mouth opened slowly. It remained open in a pained gape at the unsympathetic panels, as he realized that he had lost the best man he had ever had in his office—and the cheapest. He turned on Taylor and rent him.

The mild inflamed to fury often grow more furious and remain furious longer than those in whom fury is frequent; James arrived at his home in the Gladstone Road, Bedford Park, murderous. At the sound of his entry, more than an hour earlier than usual, his aunt came bustling out of the drawing-room. At once her quick woman's eye grasped the fact that he was hatless and ink-stained and that his lower lip was swollen. She asked him where his hat was, how he had inked his clothes, and what he had been doing to his lower lip.

With almost laborious politeness he said truthfully: "I haven't been doing anything to my lower lip."

His uncle, who led the leisured life of a retired schoolmaster, came out of his study.



He looked from Taylor, feeling a bleeding nose, to James, ignoring a bleeding lip, and cried: "Good heavens! What's this? What ever's this?"

At once his aunt put him in possession of the result of her observations. Together they pressed James to explain the loss of his hat, the ink-stains, and the swelling of his lower lip. They did this in high, excited, urgent accents. James's new eyes saw them as a fussy, interfering, and selfish old man and woman, who were always putting upon him. With a lowering face he told them, curtly and grumpily, the results of meeting the first wasp of summer in Holborn.

They were horror-stricken. The loss of a twelve-and-sixpenny bowler hat, the ruin of a five-guinea suit were bad enough, but the fact that he was out of a job was appalling—with that healthy appetite, too.

He went up to his room and changed and came down to tea. At tea the prices of hats and of suits, the foolishness of standing in front of motor-cars in motion, the wickedness of losing one's temper, the criminal folly of being rude to one's employer, and the scarcity of jobs were discussed at length; at supper they were discussed at greater length. Ever since his meeting with the first wasp of summer in Holborn life had been something of a nightmare to James. It became an intolerable nightmare. At a quarter to ten he rose and stalked into the hall, took his best hat and a stout young ash-plant, that seemed somehow to fit his mood, from the stand, and opened the front door. Uneasy at his manner, his uncle came out of the dining-room.

"Where are you going, James?" he said in accents of disapproving surprise.

"Out," said James, with quiet exactness.

"At this hour? Absurd!" cried his uncle, fuming. He paused, then added in uncompromising accents: "I shall lock up at eleven as usual, and if you are not in by then I shall not allow the door to be opened."

For all answer James walked through the door and slammed it behind him.

HIS humming head demanded the great open spaces. Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park were a good three miles away, but he never thought of taking an omnibus. He walked towards them fast and gloomily, gloomily recapitulating the points of his quarrel with the Cosmic All which had so shamefully betrayed him with a wasp. When he came to Kensington Gardens they were shut. He had known they would be.

Gloomily he walked along the edge of them to Hyde Park and into it. On reaching what he judged to be the centre of it he sat down on the grass and debated with himself the question whether the Cosmic All was or was not a mere time-honoured cheat. He arrived at a conclusion discreditable to the Cosmic All, and it inflamed his wrath to such a height that he was within an ace of beating the park-keeper who was clearing that section of the park for the night. He came into Piccadilly a dour and dangerous man, and at once his appetite reminded him that he had made a very poor supper.

He walked up Piccadilly to the Corner House of Messrs. Lyons. He had but one-and-threepence in his pocket. He spent it on a Welsh rarebit and a cup of coffee and sat on smoking cigarettes, in spite of the fact that the waiter, thoughtful of his tips, showed him clearly enough that he now preferred his room to his company. It was not till half-past one that he came out into Coventry Street, still a dour and dangerous man, but very sleepy. It was not quite twelve hours since he had met the first wasp of summer, but into those hours he had compressed more violent emotion—all of it unpleasant—than he had felt in the last three years, and, unused to violent emotion, he was worn out.

The homing instinct turned his feet, without conscious volition, towards Bedford Park, and he was quite in the temper to hammer on the door of his uncle's house till the awakened road insisted on his being let in. But Bedford Park was five miles away. Nevertheless, he started for it, and trudged sleepily and wearily down Piccadilly, and nearly at the bottom of it turned up a side street, to take a short cut into Park Lane, and found himself in that little, old-world quarter about Shepherd's Market. Its quiet increased his desire—it was almost a craving—to rest; he looked about for a quiet corner. In a small street he came to the entrance to a small mews. The very place! He could sit down in its darkest corner and sleep his weariness off in a couple of hours without being disturbed by a policeman. He walked into the mews, looked for its darkest corner, and saw that the door of the second garage was a few inches open, then that the chauffeur had locked the door without quite closing it. He opened it quietly. Inside was a large closed car.

He hesitated and looked round. The mews was quiet; no one seemed to be about. He stepped into the garage, pulled the door to behind him, stepped into the car, settled himself comfortably in the corner of the broad seat, and fell into the deadest of dead sleeps.

He awoke suddenly to a feeling of movement, and for some seconds was wholly at a loss. Then he remembered that he was in a car and in something of a panic realized that it was moving. The driver must have come to the garage and taken it out without looking into the back of it. He next per-

ceived from the speed at which they were running along the Holland Park Road that the driver was in a hurry. He had awakened still dour and dangerous, but once more prudent. What on earth was he to do? If he called the driver's attention to himself there would be awkward explanations, and in his present mood he might break the driver's neck; if he jumped from the car he might break his own neck; if he stayed where he was he might be landed a hundred miles in the country with one penny in his pocket, and still there would be awkward explanations. It seemed that the only thing he could do was to wait till the car slowed down and slip quietly out of it. Why, it might even take him nearly home!

It was also plain that the driver had no nerves; pot-holes and bumps and sharp corners were nothing to him.

But the car did not slow down. There was no traffic to check it in its course. It ran up to Hammersmith and across Hammersmith Bridge and then it ran faster. But it was not till they were clear of London that James really understood that the driver was in a deuce of a hurry. It was also plain that he had no nerves; pot-holes and bumps and sharp corners were nothing to him; he slithered, as it seemed to James, round them on two wheels, and, once the car lurched along the grass border at the side of the road in imminent danger of going into the ditch at sixty miles an hour. James had just time to close his eyes against the crash. When he opened them, it was again running along the middle of the road with a blur of dark hedges racing by on either side.

How long that mad drive through the darkness lasted James had no idea; but it lasted long enough to allow the irritation of his black Friday, which had simmered down during his sleep, to boil up again to full heat. He began to look forward to the end of his ride and to the explanations almost with a savage impatience. More than once he was on the point of knocking on the window in front of him to let the driver know he was there and get to the explanations without delay. But he was always slow to act and there was no hurry. Besides, he was wondering where the man was going at such a mad pace so early in the morning.

At last the car did stop. It stopped at a small gate that opened into a footpath through a dark wood, and when it slowed down James crouched down in the bottom of it.

The driver sat still, waiting. James opened the door quietly and slid out into the road; he pushed the door to, but did not latch it. Crouching, and very quietly, he

moved round to the back of the car and rose to his full height with a sigh of relief. He had only to keep still and it would go away and leave him. Unless explanations could not be avoided explanations were unnecessary, for there was nothing to be gained by them.

He stood for three or four minutes, enjoying his ease of mind and body after the anxiety and bumping of that race through the night, and enjoying the coolness of the scented air, very little troubled by his position. After all, he had his watch; he could raise money on it. Then his wonder about the car's errand returned, and it returned strong.

What was it waiting for beside a wood in the country at this hour in the morning? It was odd—uncommonly odd. What could the driver be doing? It did not look as if he could possibly be up to any good. Was it a burglary? Was he waiting to carry away confederates and the spoil?

The light of the false dawn was brightening the sky faintly; the church clock of a village near by chimed a half-hour. The driver stepped out of the car and walked to the gate into the wood. James could see him leaning over it, and took it that he was listening.

Then, deep in the wood, the voice of an angry man shouted: "Stop, Hetty! Stop at once! Come back, or I'll wring your neck."

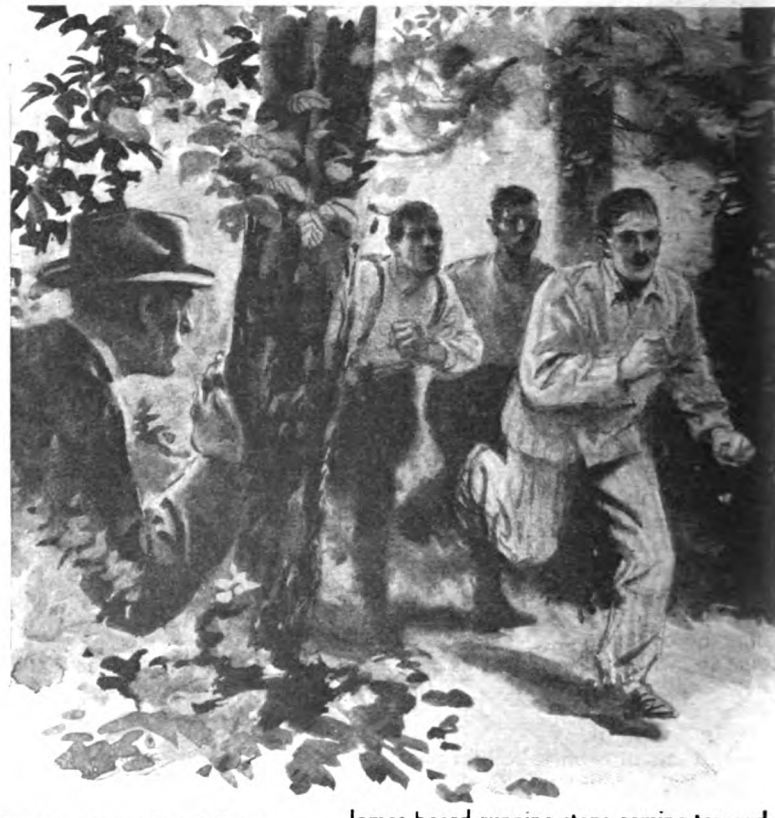
"Come on, Hetty! I'm here!" shouted the driver, and he opened the gate and ran up the footpath.

Almost on the instant James started after him. He had seldom acted so quickly in his life. He walked quickly, but quietly, up the path; fifty yards up it he heard running steps coming towards him and stepped into the bushes. Two people passed him, the driver of the car and a woman, who panted and sobbed.

"For God's sake stick it out, Hetty!" said the driver, as they passed.

The woman only sobbed on a note of dread and anguish that hurt James's heart.

He stepped out of the bushes to follow them and heard more running footsteps. He hesitated and stepped back again. Five seconds later three men rushed past him. James did not hesitate; he ran after them, and he ran fast. The dread and anguish in the woman's voice had brought the wrath excited by the first wasp of summer to its very height.



James heard running steps coming towards people passed him, the driver of the car "For God's sake stick it out, Hetty!"

The pursuers and pursued reached the road twenty yards ahead of him, and became a struggling group. The woman screamed.

Then the voice of the man who had shouted in the wood said savagely: "Take your mistress back to the house, Symonds. And as for you, Stretton, Perkins and I are going to give you the damnedest hiding you ever had in your life."

James paused long enough to see that the new-comers were two men in their shirts and breeches and a man in pyjamas, and to

remember a piece of information he had culled from a magazine, that the most effective way to use a stick is not to strike with it but to lunge, as with a bayonet. He stepped through the gate, grasped his ash-plant in the prescribed fashion, jumped into the group, and lunged with a will. The ferrule took one of the gentlemen in breeches in the middle of the back and drew from him a yelp of pained surprise. He turned sharply

him and stepped into the bushes. Two and a woman, who panted and sobbed. said the driver, as they passed.

and it took him about the middle of the front. This time he only grunted and doubled up and sat down quietly and toppled over.

James had dimly grasped the fact that the woman was the centre of the situation. The other man in breeches had dragged her through the gate into the path through the wood. James rushed for him. Apparently he had either not noticed James's arrival on the scene, or he was intent only on carrying out his instructions. The ferrule took him with the same force about the same place in the back. He also yelped as he turned. James missed with the second lunge, but following it up dashed against him with a violence that knocked him into the bushes.

James turned to the woman and said: "Get into the car! Quick!" and fairly pushed her through the gate and towards it. As he did so he saw that she had a baby in her arms. Then he saw Stretton go down before a straight left from the gentleman in pyjamas. James dashed for him, and the gentleman stepped to meet him, doubtless with another straight left, only to meet the ferrule of the ash-plant with his solar plexus. It left him only interested in his solar plexus.

Stretton was rising. James pulled him to his feet and pushed him towards the car. He seemed dazed, but went towards the front of it. The woman was leaning against the side of it, too spent to open the door. James opened it for her and fairly lifted her in and on to the seat. She sank back into the corner. He fumbled for the switch of the electric light. As he turned it on the car started with a jerk that threw him off his balance and against her. There was a healthy clamour of protest from the baby, but the woman—he saw that she was a mere girl—did not stir. James raised himself, and as he did so the baby slid down her lap and would have fallen to the floor had he not shot out a quick hand and grabbed it. Still the girl did not move; but as he made to hand it, kicking and yelling, to her, she slumped slowly sideways on the seat, and he saw that she had fainted.

He was indeed flustered. Hastily he set the baby on the opposite corner of the seat and tried to raise her to a sitting position in her corner. She was just a dead weight and sagged forward with drooping head. James's wits went. What did one do for a fainting girl? He put an arm round her and looked about helplessly, to see that the

baby had wriggled to the edge of the seat and was about to nose-dive on to the floor. He grabbed it, and there he sat, holding the girl on the seat with his right arm and gripping the baby with his left, flabbergasted.

The baby opened its mouth wider and howled louder. What did one do for a howling baby? James ground his teeth. He must stop the car and ask the driver.

He let the girl slump down again on the seat and, holding the child gingerly, rapped sharply on the glass behind the driver. Nothing happened. He thought that the driver must be still rather dazed and giving his mind to his driving. Again he ground his teeth and moved back on to the seat and tried to dandle the howling baby, and said: "S'sh-s'sh—good baby—nice baby!" It howled louder. He made another onslaught on the window behind the driver and fairly hammered on it, not without effect this time. The driver turned his head, smiled brightly at him, nodded encouragingly, and turned back to his driving.

"Damn!" said James, for the second time in less than thirteen hours, and he hammered the glass harder.

The noise seemed to annoy the baby. Impossible as it seemed, it howled yet louder. He stopped hammering.

Then a faint, indignant voice behind him said: "What are you doing to my baby?"

James turned quickly. The girl was sitting upright and looking at him with dark, tragic eyes. In an immense relief he fairly shoved the baby at her. She took it, sank back in her corner, and hugged it to her. It ceased to howl. James sat down on the seat beside her and wiped his moist and fevered brow.

The girl drew herself up a little straighter and set the baby on her lap; then she turned to him and smiled a faint, pathetic smile and said: "It was stupid of me to faint, but I was so frightened."

No girl had ever looked at James with tragic eyes before or smiled at him pathetically. Indeed, girls had found that smiles were thrown away upon him. A wave of strong protective feeling surged up in him.

Glowing, he patted her shoulder and said in reassuring accents: "You're all right now. There's nothing to be frightened of. Just lie back and rest."

She smiled at him again gratefully and closed her eyes. The car raced on through the dawn. James sat still watching the girl, and as he watched her his wrath against the people who had made her look so weary and pathetic burnt fiercely. The brutes! The thought of the damage he had done to the three of them gave him the keenest pleasure. He feared that he had not done nearly enough to their leader, the man in pyjamas. Next time—if ever there came a next time—he would make a thorough job of it.

Presently the girl opened her eyes and smiled at him again, an almost cheerful smile. But she showed no inclination to talk; she lay back brooding. Some colour came back to her cheeks. She was an uncommonly pretty creature—beautiful, indeed. James felt that it had been a privilege to help her.

THE car must have run for forty miles after leaving the wood, and now that the sun had risen James perceived that it was running north-east. It came to a stop at cross-roads on the edge of a common. There another large closed car was waiting, and as Stretton stopped, a tall, distinguished, harassed-looking woman of fifty—from the likeness, the girl's mother—opened the door and helped the girl out and hugged her and kissed her. James stepped out of the car. Stretton swung his legs over the wheel and dropped to the ground beside them, and he and the tall woman helped the girl into the other car.

Before he shut the door of it, Stretton said: "Good-bye, Hetty, old girl. Don't you worry. Lidgett will never get hold of you again. The lawyers will tie him up hand and foot."

He shut the door; the car started and ran north. Stretton watched it for a minute, then turned and came to James. Now that he could see him, James found him to be a young man of about his own age, an uncommonly good-looking young man save for a blackening eye, and very like the girl.

"I don't know who you are, sir, but we're immensely obliged to you. If it hadn't been for you the whole business would have been a wash-out, and my sister would never have got away," he said in grateful accents.

"Don't mention it," said James, in a tone of discomfort.

"How on earth did you happen to be in Chantrey Wood at four o'clock in the morning in the nick of time to be so useful?" said Stretton.

James hesitated. Any lie would have saved explanations, but he did not like lying.

"You brought me down in your car," he said.

"*I* brought you down in my *car?*" said Stretton, fairly amazed.

"I was sleeping in it," said James.

"Sleeping in it?" said Stretton, with no abatement of his amazement.

Beginning with the first wasp of summer, James explained slowly.

At the end Stretton said: "Well, all I

"You biff your uncle and wring your aunt's neck. Treat 'em rough for a bit, and you'll have 'em eating out of your hand."

can say is, it looks bally well providential! If you hadn't turned up when you did and laid out those blighters, Hetty would have been stuck at the Grange for weeks or months. She mightn't have got a chance of getting away for years. That brute Lidgett—he's her husband, you know, and she's my sister—would never have let her out of his sight. But I expect you want to be getting back. We can talk as we go."

They talked as they went. Stretton told him more about his sister's unfortunate marriage and the way in which her husband bullied and imprisoned her. James was immensely indignant.

"And will it be all right now?" he said, anxiously.

"It'll be quite all right now," said Stretton, confidently. "The day after to-morrow she starts an action for judicial separation, and the Court will certainly give her the custody of the child, which is all she cares about."

James's open and ingenuous face grew less dark; he pondered a little; then he said: "But why did she change into another car?"

"You don't know Lidgett," said Stretton, quickly. "If he could find her now he'd come down on her and drag her back by force and make her drop the action. But once the Court gets to work there'll be no molesting allowed; so we're hiding her."

"I don't think he'll get over that poke I gave him in a hurry," said James.

"How on earth did you do it? Lidgett's a perfect tiger, in liquor or out of it," said Stretton.

James raised his ash-plant and explained.

The change of cars had been made much nearer London than he had supposed; they were already running through the outskirts.

Then Stretton said: "Look here, if your bally old uncle isn't going to let you in, it's no good wasting time going to Bedford Park. You'd better come to my place and have a bite and a sup and let me put you up for the rest of the morning."

James was shy; the thought of staying with a stranger made him uncomfortable; he hesitated. But those magic words, "a bite and a sup," caused his healthy appetite to leap lithely to the fore and firmly squash that shyness. He accepted the invitation.

Ten minutes later he was in a luxurious first-floor flat in Wellington Court. Stretton's servant, a smart ex-service man of thirty, astonishingly noiseless, was up and about before his master had been in the flat a minute. A table was already laid for

supper, and for the first time in his life James's healthy appetite met a meal in which everything was really excellent—the oysters, the clear soup, the quails in aspic, the admirably devilled chicken, the strawberries and cream, the coffee, and the cigar.

Stretton, in the highest spirits at having rescued his sister, did most of the talking. He had plainly taken a liking to James and he was curious about his manner of life. It seemed to inspire into him considerable astonishment.

At the end he said: "But you're thrown away, laddie—absolutely thrown away on that bally old office! A chap who could lay out Lidgett and his push with a simple ash-plant!"

James hesitated, frowning thoughtfully. Then he said: "I've been thinking that I've let myself be put upon too much."

"You've said it, laddie," said Stretton. "You biff your uncle and wring your aunt's neck. Treat 'em rough for a bit, and you'll have 'em eating out of your hand."

He said it in the impressive accents of one profoundly convinced that it was the only way.

Then they went to bed. For the first time in his life James found himself in silk pyjamas. They made a deep impression on him—the culmination of teeming hours and symbols of a fuller life. Tired as he was, he did not fall asleep at once; the events of the night and morning kept running through his mind. Quite suddenly he was compelled to ask himself: Had the first wasp of summer deserved the injurious epithets he had lavished on it? Had it not, by opening his eyes and giving him those teeming hours, been a benefactor?

At eleven o'clock Stretton's man brought him early tea; at twelve, for the first time in his life, James bathed in a porcelain bath with silver taps that sprayed water on him from every point of the compass, while a silver shower let it stream on him from above. At half-past twelve he enjoyed a breakfast that matched the supper of the early morning. At two o'clock he arrived at his uncle's house in the car. As he said good-bye, Stretton asked him to dine and go to a show on the following Monday.

James's rather full lips were set in a thin line as he walked up the garden path with a firm step and knocked firmly, not at all the knock of a returned prodigal, on the front door. The large car stopping at their garden gate had brought his aunt and uncle into the hall, and his uncle opened to him.

With one severe voice they asked him where he had been all night.

"Out," said James, curtly, and he looked at them with cold, hard eyes.

His aunt seemed dissatisfied with the answer, obviously truthful as it was. She asked more questions; then James's stony silence and stony face seemed to produce, suddenly, a failure of curiosity in her. Both she and his uncle were now surveying him with an air of discomfort, almost as if they were surveying a rather alarming person with whom they were but little acquainted. Then, quickly, his aunt changed her carping tone to one congratulatory, and she told him that his uncle had called on Mr. Atkinson and pleaded his cause with such eloquence that he had kindly agreed to allow him to return to the office—after the proper apologies.

As she finished, the second wasp of summer came buzzing out of the door of his uncle's study. James winced to its buzz—though he was grateful to that insect race, he would never love it—but it hardened him.

"Did he say anything about a rise?" he said, in a voice they did not know and did not like.

"A rise! After the way you behaved?" cried his uncle, in accents of the last amazement.

"I've had enough of doing twice as much work as anyone else in the office for three-pounds-ten a week," said James, in the same disagreeable voice. "But I'll speak to him about it myself—on Monday morning."

There was a pause, and his aunt and uncle fairly gaped at him.

Then his aunt said, almost meekly: "You must be wanting your lunch."

"I don't. I've just had breakfast," said James. He turned to his uncle and added: "What I do want is some of my money you've been saving for me. I want twenty pounds."

"I never in my life——," his uncle began on a high, indignant note, cooled suddenly, and turned and moved towards his study.

He had a sudden impression that, if he baulked him, James would spring upon him, bury his teeth in his throat, and then tear him slowly limb from limb.

Meekly he went into his study, meekly he opened his bureau, meekly he took out a cash-box, meekly he handed to James four five-pound notes.

James took them, said "Thanks," and walked out of the study.

His aunt was still in the hall, waiting in a hovering fashion near the study door. James opened the front door and waited for the second wasp of summer to precede him through it. It did so.

"Where are you going, James?" said his aunt, in a voice that strove to be firm and stern.

"To buy some silk pyjamas," said James, and he followed the second wasp of summer.

THESE THRILLING ARTICLES ARE FACT—NOT FICTION.

Cases from My Crime-Book

By

H. ASHTON-WOLFE

(Interpreter at the Criminal Courts)

Illustrated by
F. E. HILEY

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The stories which I have selected for this series can be found in the official records, only one or two details having been rearranged in order to avoid giving pain and reopening old wounds.

No. VIII. KIKI: A Tale of Hanoi Shan, the Spider.

IN the schemes conceived by that extraordinary, subtle, remorseless Oriental, Hanoi Shan, little was left to chance; nevertheless chance seemed ever to fight on our side. In the following story a queer love for a dog, amazing as it may sound, brought the cruel Apache, Raoul Ladoux, one of Shan's associates, under the avenging blade of the guillotine.

THE MYSTERIOUS DANCER.

ONE morning M. Dufresne, of the Paris Sûreté, said to me:—

"Have you been to the Folies Bergères lately?"

"No—I don't often go there. Why?"

"I was wondering if you had seen the acrobatic dancer, 'La Belle Lisette.'"

"Oh, yes," I replied. "I saw her some weeks ago. She had a partner then."

"She had—but now she dances alone. Well, what did you think of her?"

"A handsome woman. In her wild barbaric dances she looked more like a Russian than a Frenchwoman. I should think she is utterly heartless."

M. Dufresne nodded.

"The public hissed her off the stage last night. I hear they are beginning to give her an ugly nickname. Something evil apparently happens to all her admirers. You remember there was M. Valorbe, the painter? It was his influence and money which brought the dancer to the front. No one knows her origin—but she suddenly became notorious about six months ago as the model who sat for his famous picture, 'Madame du Barry.' Then the Scala engaged her to dance in a revue. Those wild dances which she invented pleased the public—but it was the painter's influence which really made her a star. Valorbe died mysteriously, and rumour whispers that the dancer had a hand in his death. We failed

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to convince the magistrate that it was a crime, although a very large sum of money, which Valorbe had received from his notary two days previous to his death, was missing and has never been traced.

THE MURDER OF THE BANKER.

"NOW, to-day, M. Chapalle, the banker, who was known to have aspired to win the dancer's regard, has been found dead. This time it is murder. An ugly crime! I am going out to his little house at Auteuil at once. You had better come along."

I sprang to my feet and seized my hat. "Shall I bring my cameras and tools?" I asked.

"Yes, of course—although Rousseau, who is out there, will be annoyed. He is in his element when investigating a crime which appears to be the work of Apaches."

We all liked and even admired the old soldier. A true child of the Paris slums, Inspector Rousseau, known as the Brigadier because his red nose and fierce bristling moustache made him look like a comic gendarme, had worked his way up to a position of trust by dogged perseverance. He affected to sneer at modern scientific methods—laughed at finger-prints and chemical analysis and relied on his extraordinary knowledge of the Paris underworld to find his man. Strangely enough, he often succeeded where all our science failed. Once the Brigadier started, nose down on a trail, he would vanish sometimes for weeks, until one day he would appear again unexpectedly with inflamed nose and untidy clothes, and haul his prey to the cells, reporting laconically:—

"Chief, I've got him! But it cost me a round fifty bottles."

From past experience I knew, as did every member of the Sûreté, that this was all a pose. Truly he drank—but he saw to it that those he suspected drank more—and in secret Rousseau used every new trick invented by M. Bertillon.

THE ROOM OF STRANGE ORGIES.

ROUSSEAU met us at the door of the Villa Medici, where the crime had been committed. Saluting M. Dufresne, he led the way to a large *salon*. Never had I seen such a weird room. The walls, windows, and door were draped with crimson velvet. The furniture was upholstered and painted to match them; even the glass in the large French window was red, and the thick carpet was the same fantastic colour. The effect produced was truly horrible. I could not repress a shiver of fear when, following the direction of Rousseau's pointing hand, I saw the figure of an elderly man sitting stiffly erect in a scarlet arm-chair. A blood-red mist appeared to surround him, as a ray of sunlight, passing through the ruby glass, struck full on the lifeless distorted face.

"For Heaven's sake open that window," M. Dufresne gasped. "I feel as though I were wading through blood." But even the sunlight did little to dispel the feeling of nausea which had seized on us. We saw that the murdered man was dressed in pyjamas and silk dressing-gown of the same revolting hue. His hands and feet were bound to the chair, and from his left side protruded the handle of a *lingue* (an Apache knife). M. Dufresne walked quickly over to the gruesome figure.

"He was stabbed?" he queried.

"Yes," the Brigadier replied. "But after he was dead."

"Why, surely it was the knife that killed him?"

"Oh, no! Look. If you examine the wound you'll see that there is not a drop of blood. Look at his eyes," and the Brigadier lifted an eyelid. "Pin-point pupils and a congested face. Poison, I imagine."

"Then why the knife?"

"Ah, that——!" and Rousseau shrugged his shoulders with exaggerated emphasis. "Probably a blind."

"What have you found?" M. Dufresne snapped nervously.

"Many things. There was a party here last night. About fourteen guests. All well-known people. It did not end until near dawn."

"How do you know?"

"When I came this morning—an hour after the discovery of the crime by Sergeant Dubois, who was attracted by the frantic barking of a dog, I found the rooms hazy with cigar smoke which had not settled. That was at seven o'clock, and day breaks about six. Also there were many half-empty champagne bottles on the table. I sampled them, and the wine was still sparkling. Furthermore, Sergeant Dubois reports that groups of noisy men and women in evening dress drove away just before the dog began to bark and howl."

M. Dufresne nodded.

"I found no one in the place; even the dog had disappeared; I imagine it to have been a small white animal with black spots——"

M. Dufresne raised his eyebrows.

"It had lain for some time curled up in an arm-chair—therefore it could not be very large, and I have some of the hairs."

Little did we guess the all-important part this dog was afterwards to play.

"But what made you report that it

was an Apache crime? Except for that knife——"

"True; but at first I was deceived. Even now I believe that the crime was carried out by ruffians, although it was probably not conceived by them."

"Go on."

"You see—the poor fellow had been—well, persuaded to open his own safe. It is in the next room. I found a complete outfit of burglar's tools in front of it. The thieves must have worked for some time, but they failed to open the door. They then forced M. Chapalle to disclose the combination. These burns——"

"Don't, Rousseau! I see—poor fellow."

"That was why they killed him. One at least of the gang was known to him."

"Ah—you think that the woman he was known to have loved——"

"Yes—I think that she drugged him to give her accomplices time to force the safe. When they failed, other means were used. I have the names of some of the guests. They had invitations, and several of these I found on a tray in the hall."

"That looks as though it had been done purposely."

"I think so too, for they are well-known people—quite above suspicion. You'll see. They will testify that La Belle Lisette left with them—an alibi."

"How do you know that she was here?"

"I *don't* know—but the party was in the nature of a bacchanal. A girl danced with bare feet on the big dining-table among the dishes and wine-glasses. Her feet were wet with wine and have left clear imprints on the polished wood. Now I come to the strangest thing of all. Look," and Rousseau pointed to a folded napkin on a side table. M. Dufresne opened it quickly and gave a cry of surprise. In the linen was a small white dove. Its head had been wrenched off and was lying beside it.

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"WHAT the devil does that mean?" M. Dufresne asked. In answer Rousseau picked up a soft clinging robe of white silk which had been thrown carelessly behind a chair. It was shaped like a Greek chlamys and the front and back were drenched with blood.

"I said that wicked things happened here last night. You will find that this blood is from the dove. I heard of such dances when I was in the East. It explains the scarlet room and the presence of drugs in several wineglasses. No doubt the whole thing was suggested by this Lisette."

"Good Lord!" I exclaimed. "Yes, I've heard of this 'Dance of the Dying Dove' also. But where would such a girl as La Belle Lisette get the idea from—and why——"

"Well, it acts hypnotically, I've been told, doesn't it?" Rousseau said, thoughtfully. "The red room, the whirling white dress—the blood—some devilish scheme which went wrong, I imagine, making murder necessary."

"Rubbish, Brigadier!—you are imagining things. What about that burglar's outfit? That's commonplace enough. The doctor and the magistrate will be here in a moment. Then we'll get down to facts. The main thing to remember is that a man has been killed."

When the *juge d'instruction* arrived he also impatiently waved aside all Rousseau's theories.

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These sharp matter-of-fact orders brought us to our senses again, for I admit that since entering that terrible room we had all fallen under an evil spell.

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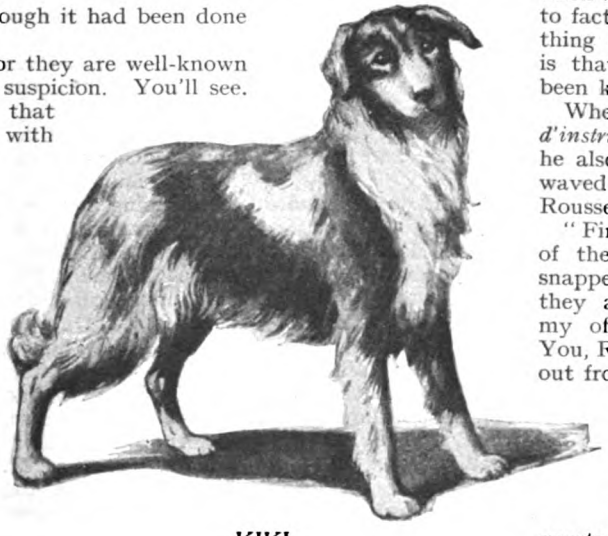

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Startling news awaited us that evening at headquarters. M. Chapalle had succumbed to morphine poisoning. Rousseau was

right—he had been stabbed when already dead. The horrified guests, men and women of the best society, were unanimous in declaring that their host was quite cheerful, although very drowsy, when they left, but this they had put down to the wine. La Belle Lisette had been the guest of honour and danced for them. But *she had remained* when they withdrew. Two other important facts were disclosed by the investigation. M. Chapalle had displayed a wonderful diamond necklace during the evening, which was intended as a wedding gift to his daughter. Furthermore, we discovered that he had realized nearly half a million francs the day before, and this money had been brought by a bank messenger to the Villa Medici. Both the money and the necklace had disappeared.

A warrant was at once issued for the arrest of the dancer, but it came too late. When the police, receiving no reply to their knocking, forced the door of her flat, they found the place untenanted and in wild disorder. On the dressing-table was a letter addressed to the police. In it La Belle Lisette confessed that she had killed M. Chapalle in a fit of jealous rage, because money and necklace were intended for a rival. She ended by stating that it was her intention to commit suicide.

" You will find me in the Seine," the letter concluded. " The diamonds and money shall never go to another."

A frantic search for the girl was immediately organized, for the police believed the letter to be a ruse. But two days later her body was recovered from the river. A blow which might have been made by a ship's propeller had so disfigured her that identification was difficult, but fellow-artistes recognized the dress and trinkets. Furthermore, a small blue star, which was tattooed on the left hand, had been noticed and commented on by her friends. They all declared that it was La Belle Lisette, and the police had perforce to be content.

The Seine was dragged and divers searched in vain for the money and diamonds—nothing was found. It was a most disappointing case. What happened in that scarlet room was a mystery which we despaired of solving. Thread after thread snapped. The elderly waiter who had served the cold dishes ordered by M. Chapalle from a Paris *traiteur* proved conclusively that he left before the drinking began. The servant who admitted the guests was a chauffeur lent for the occasion by one of the dead man's friends. M. Chapalle had kept no servants at Auteuil. There remained only the dog which had given the alarm. We discovered that the dancer had possessed a small black and white sheep-dog named Kiki, but it had not been seen since her death. We hoped that by tracing the animal, if it still lived, we might find the accomplices who had attempted to break open the safe in the Villa Medici. Rousseau was convinced that the burglar's outfit, which had probably been forgotten because of the unexpected arrival of the policeman Dubois, belonged to skilled housebreakers.

Our investigation at last led us to an evil restaurant in Auteuil, the Café des Amis. It was the meeting place of all the riff-raff of the suburbs, and the owner—a ruffian named Julot—had already served several sentences for robbery. His wife, a bad-tempered creature nicknamed " La Frangine " (The Pal), was well known to the police. Two of the husband's friends—villainous Apaches both, and known as Nenesse and Toto—were just the type of men who would commit such a crime as that horror at the Villa Medici, but we had as yet no proof of their complicity.

ANOTHER MURDER—EVEN STRANGER THAN THE FIRST.

ROUSSEAU was still spending most of his time in and near the Café des Amis when the mysterious death of Baron de Zeidler startled all Paris.

The Baron had been famous for his racehorses. One of them, a thoroughbred mare named Mariposa, was entered for the forthcoming annual Grand Prix. Rich and idle, Baron de Zeidler had spent much of his time and money in collecting historic gems. Although a married man, his weakness for the fair sex was well known and had been frequently commented upon in the Press. A telephone message informed the police that the unfortunate Baron had been found lying with fractured skull in the box of his favourite horse.

' Another former friend of La Belle Lisette," grunted M. Dufresne, when the news arrived at the police headquarters. " Even after her death the curse seems still to be active. I wonder——"

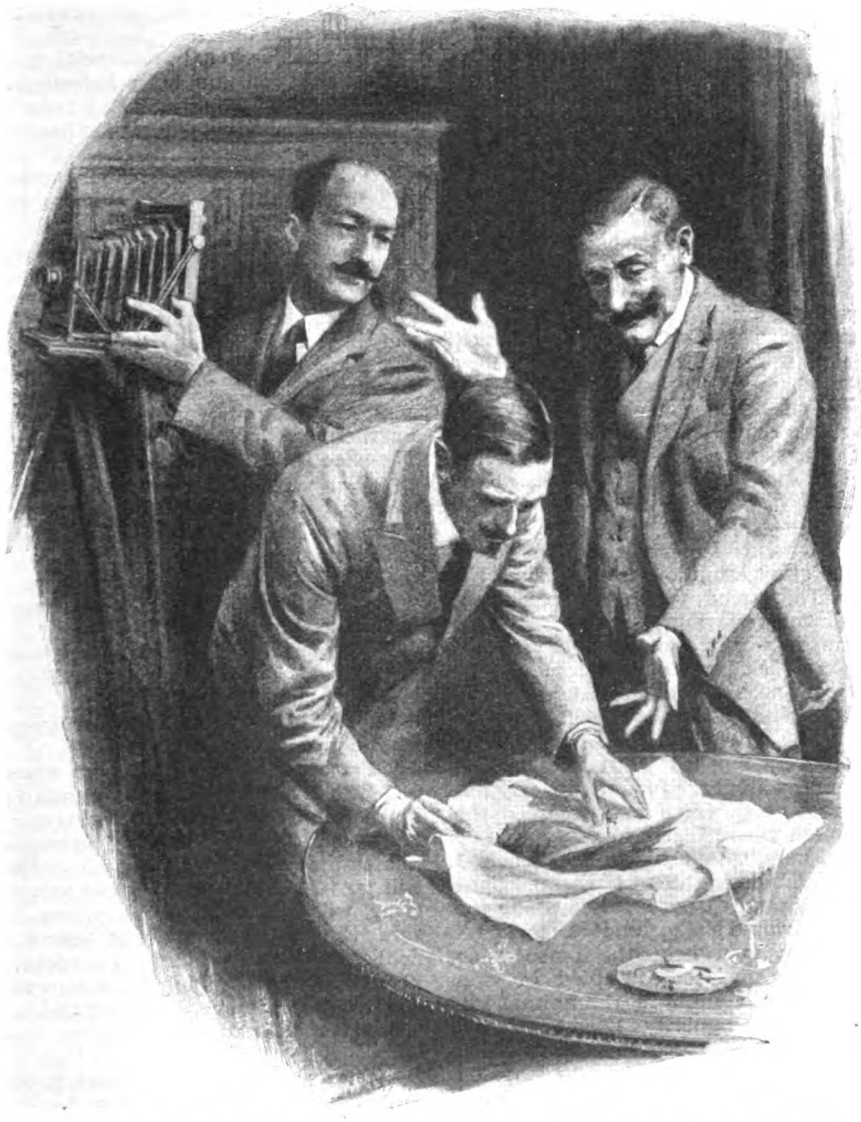
At this moment the door opened and Rousseau entered. Saluting his chief, he turned to me.

" M. Bertillon wishes you to come at once. We are going to St. Cloud."

M. Dufresne nodded approvingly.

" Of course," he said, " this Baron was a great friend of M. Bertillon. I am glad he is going to investigate. Let me have your report when you return."

Les Peupliers—the country house of the dead man—was a grey old building standing in the middle of a spacious park, one part of which was set aside for the stables and training fields.



M. Dufresne opened it quickly and gave a cry of surprise. In the linen was a small white dove.

At our arrival a servant conducted us at once to the Baroness. She it was who had telephoned to M. Bertillon begging him to come and investigate in person. The Baroness was a tall, dark woman with rather an aggressive manner; a handsome woman, indeed, but there was something vulgar and insincere about her which grated on the nerves. I was surprised to learn that she was an American, for I had thought her to be from the South of France. Her account of the discovery was brief: one of the jockeys who had gone to Mariposa's box had been horrified to see his master lying at full length face downwards just behind the horse. He had seen at once that the Baron was dead and had therefore not moved the body, but had led the mare into another part of the stable to prevent her from trampling on the unfortunate man.

"I have been absent for some days," the Baroness concluded. "When I returned this morning I was quite overcome by the terrible news. I am sure it is not an accident. My husband, a Hungarian, brought up from childhood among horses—

is it likely that he would be killed by his favourite animal? No, no—I feel sure a vile and brutal crime has been committed."

"Nothing has been touched, madame?" M. Bertillon asked.

"Nothing, monsieur. The gendarmes were called, of course—but when I informed them that you were coming they merely mounted guard over the house and the stables. I felt sure you would come in person, since my poor husband was your friend."

'Naturally, madame. Now, with your permission, we will go to the stables."

We crossed a paddock and saw a burly country policeman standing stiffly before the door of one of the boxes. Just inside, sprawling on its face, was the body. It was evident that the Baron had met his death at some time on the preceding evening, for he was wearing a dinner jacket. Near his outstretched hand was a half-smoked cigar.

Rousseau and I watched breathlessly whilst the great criminologist examined the ground. The wound, which had bled much, appeared to puzzle him. For a long time he remained deep in thought, studying the stark figure. At last he said to me:—

"Get your camera ready and take several photographs from above and from the door. Then join me outside."

I had barely finished when M. Bertillon called to me excitedly. I found him examining the race-horse which had occupied the compartment where the Baron lay.

"Come here," said my chief, when I appeared. "You are about the same height as my poor friend. I wish to see where the mare's hoofs would strike you if she kicked."

Whilst two men held the horse some distance from me we attempted in vain to make her lash out, but the animal appeared to be singularly good-tempered. Again M. Bertillon stood long minutes in silence—his eyes fixed in a vacant stare on the mare. Abruptly he struck his hand with clenched fist.

"That's it!" he cried. "I knew there was something queer about that wound. It's murder, right enough. What a clever plot! Thank Heaven that, as usual, it was *just* not clever enough."

"Murder?" queried Rousseau, "but how? Surely his horse killed him?"

"Come to the stable and I'll explain."

WHEN we were alone in the sinister compartment M. Bertillon stooped down and pointed to the clear marks of horseshoes on the face and neck of the dead man.

"Examine these weals and tell me what is wrong."

We stared anxiously, but could not see what our chief meant.

"You don't see it? No—neither did I at first. Yet you are both horsemen. Tell me, how does a horse kick? I mean, which end of the shoe would strike hardest and first?"

"Why, the rounded end, naturally."

"Just so! And—does a horse kick upwards or downwards?"

"Upwards, of course."

"Now look at these wounds, and learn to use your eyes. You see—the round part of a horseshoe has penetrated deeply into the skull, but it is the *wrong way up*. It was made by a downward blow and not by an upward kick. Besides, no horse, except perhaps a wild stallion, could kick so high. Furthermore, look at the size of the marks. The shoe that made these wounds was that of a heavy saddle-horse. You noticed how slender, light, and beautifully made were the shoes of the race-horse. The jockey told me that they weigh scarcely five ounces each, whereas the ordinary hunter's shoe weighs fourteen ounces. No—the mare did not make those wounds."

"Wonderful!" Rousseau exclaimed, admiringly. "That's clever work, chief. Who killed the man, then?"

M. Bertillon smiled indulgently, pleased by the praise.

"I use my eyes, but I'm no wizard. I feel sure my poor friend was murdered, but how I don't know yet, nor by whom. That is the next step. Let us examine and photograph the ground outside. Then we will go to the house. A great pity that a cigar will not show finger-prints. I feel sure the cigar stump was placed there deliberately as a blind. Rousseau, telephone to Dr. Arnauld and ask him to come at once to examine the body, and tell the gendarme not to allow anyone to enter here."

The ground outside was brick-paved and helped us very little, but just as we were about to go my chief pointed excitedly to a dark stain at the extreme end of the path. A rapid examination convinced us that it was blood.

"This is where the man was killed, and he was then dragged or carried into the stable. There must have been several men, unless the murderer was exceptionally powerful, for my poor friend was no light weight."

The Baroness was waiting for us when we reached the house. Looking her in the eyes, M. Bertillon said, slowly:—

"You were right, madame—poor de Zeidler has been murdered."

The woman became pale, and Bertillon continued:—

"Those wonderful gems the Baron possessed—where are they kept?"

"In a safe in his study. He alone knew the combination, and the key to an outer steel door was always on his person. The safe was made by Messrs. Mildé to his order. He was very proud of that safe, and often boasted that no one could open it."

Bertillon drew a key from his pocket.

"Is this the key, madame? I found it attached to a gold chain around his neck."

"Then it must be the one—but it only opens the first door."

"Thank you. We should like to examine the study, and afterwards I will question the servants who were here last night."

The Baroness rang a bell and a trim, handsome brunette—the parlourmaid, evidently—conducted us to the dead man's study. As she was about to withdraw M. Bertillon stopped her.

"You were in the house last night, mademoiselle?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," she replied, dropping a curtsy.

"Was the Baron still in this room when you retired?"

"Yes, sir. I did not wait on him as a rule, but last night Auguste, the valet, was away—it was his free evening—and I served the coffee and cognac here. Master was then reading and smoking."

"After serving coffee you did not come in again?"

"No, sir. Master said that I need not wait up. I think—I believe——"

"What? Come, speak out."

"Well, sir, master sometimes received friends when madame was away. He often admitted them himself. I think someone came last night."

"Did you see anyone?"

"No, sir."

"Thank you; that is all, then."

When the girl had withdrawn Bertillon said, musingly:—

"Strange, I can't place her. But I've seen that powerful cleft chin before. Now let us look at the safe."

This was a huge steel box built into the wall. It was really a safe within a safe, for when we had opened the massive door we saw that inside, surrounded by some fireproof substance, was a second smaller safe. Since we could not open it Bertillon at once telephoned to the makers to send one of their experts. Pending his arrival I carefully examined the room, but found nothing unusual. I was about to say so when I saw that my chief was staring fixedly at the coffee table.

"Look," he called to me, "the maid was right. Someone visited the Baron last night."

I hurried over and saw that he was examining some circular marks on the tray.

"There is the liqueur glass from which he drank, you see. It is quite small, but two larger glasses, wineglasses probably, have also stood here. Wine was poured into them by an unsteady hand, for some of it was spilled. A sweet Spanish wine, I imagine; it is thick and sticky. Someone removed those glasses. Quick, let us see if they have been hidden in the room."

We hunted everywhere, but without avail. Our search was not quite futile, however, for near a couch we found a spot that was still damp and smelt of wine. With little regard for the valuable carpet M. Bertillon cut this out with a sharp knife and placed it carefully in one of our metal carriers.

KICKED?—OR POISONED?

"TAKE this to Lebrun at once and let him analyse it. I have seen all I want. I am going to question that maid again and then the other servants. Develop your negatives and have a print of each ready as quickly as possible and bring them to my office. I shall be there as soon as I have obtained Dr. Arnauld's report."

I had barely completed my work when the telephone shrilled and my chief's voice summoned me. I found Lebrun, the police analyst, and Dr. Arnauld already waiting when I entered. A moment later M. Bertillon appeared, and with him, to my delight, I saw Bannister, the American detective. We greeted each other warmly, for we were great friends. Noting my surprise, M. Bertillon said:—

"I have requested your friend to obtain certain information for me from his New York office. Sit down, gentlemen, and let us go into this matter. First, your report, doctor."

"Here it is," Dr. Arnauld said. "Baron de Zeidler died from cerebral hæmorrhage caused by a blow or a kick which fractured the base of the skull. The wound is crescent-shaped and inclines me to believe that a horse kicked him, perhaps because he stumbled against the animal. I mention this because I have discovered traces of morphine poisoning. The man was in a stupefied condition before he was killed. You will find the details here," and he placed several sheets of paper on the table.

"Good! And you, M. Lebrun?"

"The piece of carpet was impregnated with wine—Malaga, or Xeres. I also found traces of morphine."

M. Bertillon nodded.

"Now, M. Bannister—what does the cable from America say?"

"There was no need for a cable. I know all about the Baroness. She is a former Lola Dawson, from Chicago. She became notorious some years ago in New York cabarets. Baron de Zeidler fell in love with her, divorced his first wife, and married Lola."

"Nothing else?"

"No—nothing of importance. But there were several scandals in New York society because this Lola was believed to have had—well—abnormal tastes."

"Thank you. Press that bell, Lebrun, please. Rousseau should be here by now."

Raoul Ladoux's make-up as "La Belle Lisette," the dancer.

THE DOG AGAIN.

A FEW moments later the Brigadier entered. There was a triumphant twinkle in his eye as he looked us over.

"*The little dog again*, sir," he said, with a queer smile. "After you left, the maid Françoise drove away in a cab, and with her went a dog which she had always kept. *It was the dog which had belonged to La Belle Lisette!*"

"What, and you let her get away?" M. Bertillon shouted furiously.

Rousseau started back indignantly. "But surely monsieur knows me better—I followed the cab to the Point du Jour gate, where it was dismissed. The young lady then entered a car which had been waiting and drove to the Nord Station. An hour later a nice elegant *young man*, who had taken a suburban train, returned to the Nord Station by another train. He was carrying a small suit-case in which was *the beautiful hair and the dress* of the maid Françoise. If only the little dog had not been with him, and if I had not seen him undress and take off his wig through the little glass window in the railway carriage, I should have been nicely fooled."

"Wonderful! Then Françoise——"

"Françoise is a young man of very bad antecedents—he is an Apache named Raoul Ladoux."

"Good heavens! I wonder if La Belle Lisette——"

"Oh, without a doubt, sir. This young man changes into a beautiful woman whenever he pleases. The body in the Seine was not La Belle."

Bertillon thumped the table violently. "Great heavens! Here am I, the inventor of the *portrait parlé*—and I don't apply my own system. *Fossette!* Messieurs, that cleft chin of his is classified as *fossette!* I felt sure I knew the chin, yet I failed to recognize it. What a wonderful actor the fellow must be! Where did you leave him?"

"Downstairs in the cells, sir. He drove to the Café des Amis—it all fits in—left again minus bag and dog, and walked to the tramway—and here he is now in cell fourteen, after nearly knifing me. He is very indignant and demands to know why he is arrested. I didn't tell him."

"Bravo, Rousseau! Well done! And the Café des Amis?"

"Two energetic officers dressed as workmen who don't want work are watching it—drinking there, and generally keeping dear Julot and his handsome wife busy. But that is not all. When I searched Ladoux, who, as you know, is already wanted by us for several little exploits with the Pegomas bandits—murder and so forth—I found a little note. He tried to swallow it; but I choked him until he coughed it up. Here it is."

THE SPIDER'S HAND.

WE eagerly bent over the dirty scrap of paper—on it were only two words, "Viens demain" (Come to-morrow), and under them a crude drawing of a—spider.

"Good God!" yelled Bannister. "The Spider, Hanoi Shan! That explains everything. Only his cunning brain could have conceived such a plot."

I gasped—as did M. Bertillon. We looked at each other—awestruck—for a long minute. Then our chief said, angrily :—

"Nonsense! The Spider is dead, or, if not, he has left France long ago. Where could he have hidden since the murder of Van Bromen—a monster like that ?"

Rousseau shrugged his shoulders. "Anywhere—he is a spider. He lies hidden whilst others do his work. That's why, when I found that little message, I had the *café* watched and said nothing to *Mademoiselle* Raoul Ladoux. We must let him and his friends lead us to Shan."

"He is a man, this Apache, I take it—not——"

"Oh, no, sir—a man—or a devil if you like—cruel and deadly, but very handsome—small hands and feet and muscles of steel. A treacherous beast, with many murders to his account."

M. Bertillon chewed his pen thoughtfully for a while. Then he said :—

"I nearly applied for a warrant against the Baroness. Now I see that she had nothing to do with this crime. It is that cunning Oriental and his female impersonator. What a devilish scheme ! I don't see yet how they killed the Baron, but probably the Apache, in the *rôle* of a fascinating lady's-maid, first drugged him and then—then—I don't know," and Bertillon threw out his hands with a gesture of despair.

"We shall know soon," he continued. "Have the fellow removed to the Santé. We must run no risks—let him have what he wants, food, paper, pencil, but watch him night and day. If he writes letters, all the better; every scrap that leaves his cell must be taken to the laboratory. Don't let him suspect he is watched, and withdraw your men from the *café*. Only Colbert and yourself must watch that place. A false step would ruin everything. I am almost sorry you arrested Ladoux. Perhaps we shall release him. At all costs we must get that fiendish Oriental this time."

Raoul Ladoux in the wig he wore when posing as the maid Françoise.

"And the jewels ?" I asked, curiously.

"Oh, the safe was empty, of course. A woman looking like the Baroness has already tried to sell one of the Bourbon rubies. Delavoye, the jeweller, phoned an hour ago. The woman got away, but it was not the Baroness. She is being watched. Obviously they wished to make us believe that she is an accomplice. Shan has made several bad mistakes this time. His brain must be degenerating."

Bannister laughed. "His brain is not failing, chief—but his men make mistakes. The dog has been his undoing in this case. I dare say he knows nothing about that. He never operates in person."

Two days passed in anxious waiting; Ladoux spent his time reading and sleeping and showed no desire to communicate with the outside world. On the evening of the second day Rousseau brought a sheet of paper to the laboratory.

"I wonder if this contains more than just his menu," he said laconically, flipping it across to me.

It was a sheet of stiff paper on which was a typed list of dishes for the prisoner's meals. These were sent in from a neighbouring restaurant at the request of the Apache. I examined the paper closely.

"I see he has marked the food to be sent with a cross and written 'Two raw onions' underneath," I remarked.

"Yes, he has onions every day."

"Strange, isn't it—raw onions ?"

"Oh, no—these fellows all like onions, or garlic."

Without answering I carried the paper to a Bunsen flame, over which I placed a polished plate of steel. When it was hot I passed this back and forwards over the paper, pressing it down gently.

Rousseau gave a shout of delight. A moment before the back of the menu had been a complete blank. Under the influence of the hot plate a faint tracing was now visible. Thus encouraged, I prepared a liquid known to chemists as Iglycal—made with

chlorate of aluminium. This I dabbed over the parts where the tracing had appeared. Instantly a message the colour of rust became visible, and we read :—

"*The police have got me. Warn the Spider. Hide the stones. They'll get nothing from me. They know about the Baron. Tell the Spider to hide in the caveau (underground). Give Loletta money for my lawyer. Please feed Kiki—and let him exercise. He is in the cellar. The café is suspected.*

"LA MÔME."

(Apache slang for girl.)

"That was why he wanted raw onions. This has been written with onion juice. Milk would have served equally well, had he known. When is this to be delivered?"

"To-night. It's for to-morrow's food."

"Very well, I'll tell M. Bertillon. In an hour this writing will be invisible again. Then you can send the menu to the restaurant. Don't let it pass out of your sight; we must know who takes it to the Spider, and follow them."

Rousseau was standing in the doorway, revolver in hand,

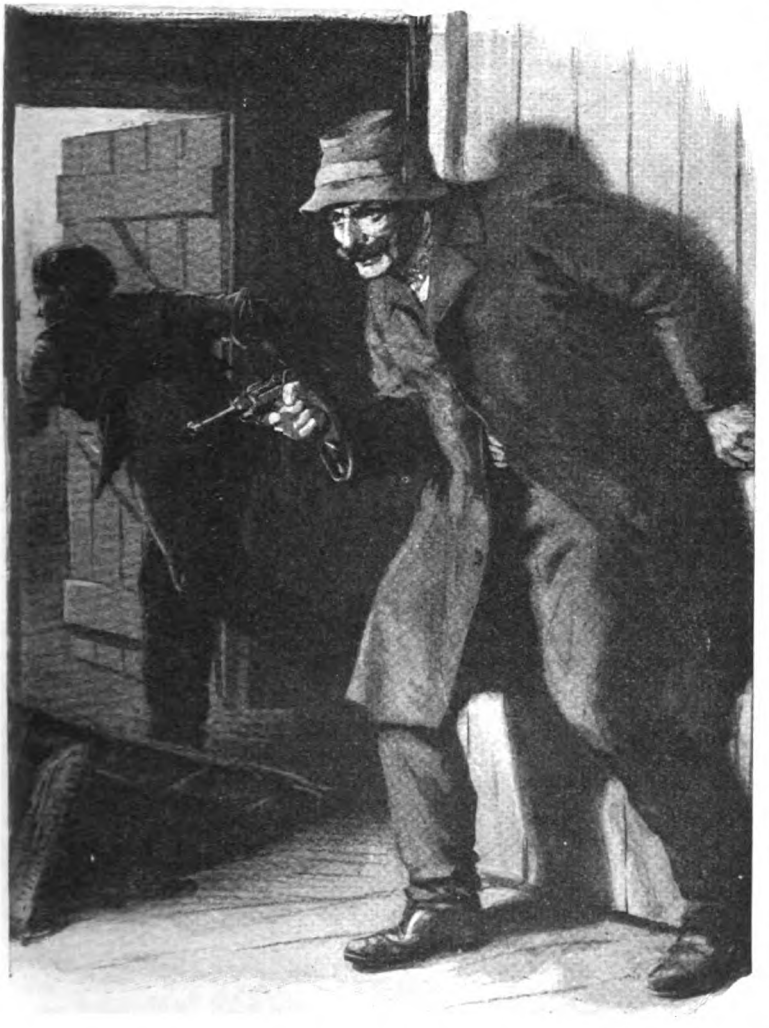
THE ESCAPE OF THE SPIDER.

AN hour later Dufresne, Bannister, and myself, well armed and flanked by a dozen detectives, were ready to follow the messenger. We had waited but a short time when Rousseau, who was dressed as a cabman—a disguise which suited him—came out of the restaurant near the prison and climbed on his box. Shortly afterwards one of the waitresses appeared and, to our joy, hailed the cab Rousseau was driving. As Rousseau whipped up his horse we saw a scrap of paper flutter to the ground. Picking it up I read, "Café des Amis." There was no need for us to follow. Instead, we separated and gained the neighbourhood of the sinister wine-shop half an hour before the messenger drove up in the old cab. The ruffian Julot came to the door and we saw the girl hand him the menu. Then Julot paid Rousseau, who, true to type, grumbled and argued and finally insisted on receiving a bottle of wine as *pourboire*. It was a good move, and we knew that the astute old fellow would signal to us the moment we were needed. Several men with guns had been placed in a ditch commanding the road leading to the *café*, others lounged about the neighbourhood.

With fast-beating hearts we watched and waited.

Abruptly we heard angry shouts proceeding from the large tap-room, the door was flung wide, and several rough characters came tumbling out. We dashed in at once. Rousseau was standing in the doorway leading to the kitchen, revolver in hand, menacing several men who were snarling and spitting with rage. In a moment our fellows had them securely bound. Meanwhile Rousseau had turned and rushed down the passage and we heard his voice calling to us.

We found him struggling with the husband, Julot, who had been about to climb into an opening in the floor, disclosed by the displacement of the kitchen range. When we appeared he pulled out a pistol and fired three shots in quick succession down the hole.



menacing several men who were snarling and spitting with rage.

"Quick," Dufresne yelled, "that's a signal—in with you!" We scrambled hurriedly down a crazy wooden ladder and found ourselves in a wide, smooth tunnel sloping gently downwards. In the distance lights flashed and raucous voices screamed and yelled.

"The police!" we heard. "Run!"

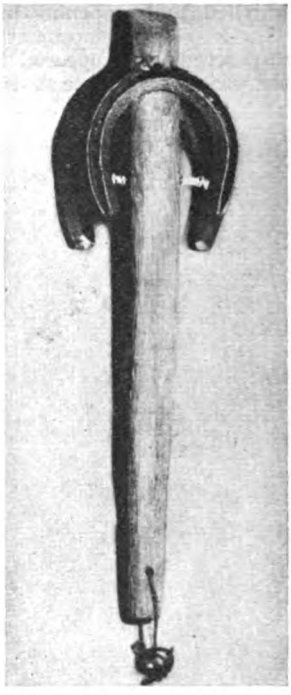
Several shots whistled past us and one of our men dropped. We at once fired a volley in return and stumbled forward at a run. The underground passage was nearly half a mile long, and several times we saw fleeing shapes disappearing up small runways. Some of the officers followed these, whilst we kept straight on. Bannister was some distance ahead when we heard him shout: "The Spider! Quick! Back to the river—he's off by boat." But we failed to understand the warning, and rushed forward.

A moment later we came to where the American stood panting. Before us was the Seine, its muddy waters swirling around our legs. The tunnel, probably an ancient sewer, connected the *café* with the river bank. Telephone messages were immediately sent, warning the police up and down stream to look out for a launch containing an Oriental. Unfortunately, Bannister had only dimly seen the boat and could give no description. He had been attracted by the roar of a powerful engine, but when he

raced to the spot from where the sound had come the boat was disappearing in the distance. For the moment there was nothing else to do but wait for the river police.

MEANWHILE we explored the tunnel. We found the Spider's retreat in a passage leading to a large chamber which was guarded by a stout wooden door. It was well furnished and contained a comfortable bed. On the table were several empty jewel-cases and a telephone extension to the *café* above. To our joy we saw that a small safe in one corner was still closed. In it were most of the jewels stolen from the Baron de Zeidler. But our best find was a stout piece of wood shaped like a club to which two horseshoes had been fastened with wire. It was lying on the Spider's bed.

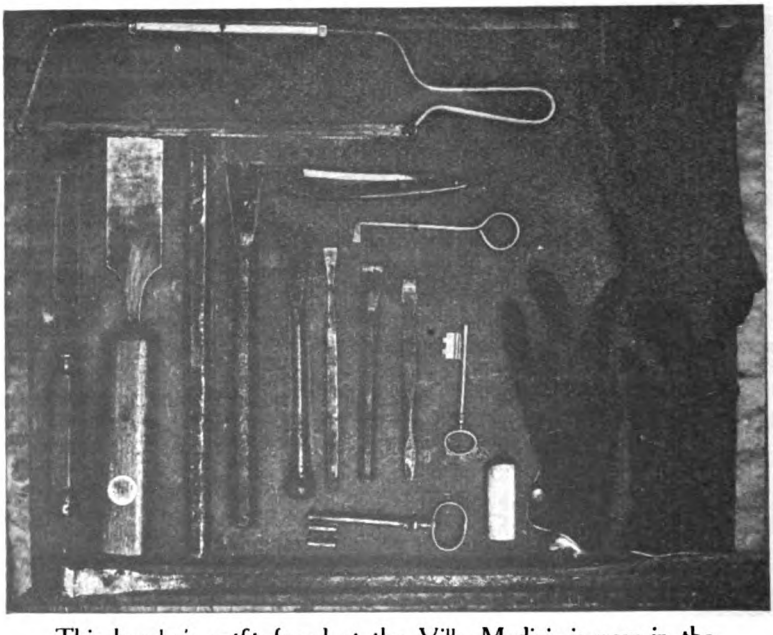
"That is the weapon which killed the Baron," said Dufresne. "M. Bertillon will be pleased. Ingenious, is it not? But they should have chosen racing shoes instead of this heavy type, and the murderer should have struck upwards, as a horse kicks."



The terrible weapon, invented by Hanoi Shan, with which Baron de Zeidler was killed.

We were about to go when Bannister, who was examining the place minutely, pointed out that although the chamber was well furnished, even to a thick carpet, there was no means of illuminating it. The only lamp we found was a photographer's ruby safe-light. We came to the conclusion that the foul creature who had lived there was so entirely accustomed to the dark that daylight, or even ordinary lamplight, was painful to his eyes. We remembered how luminous his eyes had appeared on that night in the Hôtel d'Amsterdam when we had faced him for the first time. (See "The Suicide Room"—May, 1927.)

Although the Spider had again escaped, we felt confident that it would not be for long. Meanwhile we had captured a number of Apaches all wanted for various crimes, besides the infamous shrew who owned the inn, and her pretty trio Julot, Nenesse, and Toto.



This burglar's outfit, found at the Villa Medici, is now in the Police Museum.

We stationed several men in the tunnel in case Shan returned for the jewels, and then ascended to the *café*. Here we were greeted with the shrill whining of a dog which had been locked in a back room. It was Kiki, the small black and white sheep-dog, who had unwittingly brought all Hanoi Shan's schemes to naught. M. Dufresne ordered the animal to be taken to headquarters.

Police launches explored both banks of the Seine

NENESSE.

"LA FRANGINE."

JULOT.

The Apaches of the Café des Amis.

for miles all night in vain. There were too many hiding-places which Shan could make use of. Galling as it was, we knew, when dawn came and the telephone was still silent, that the Spider was yet free.

THE next day Raoul Ladoux was brought before the *juge d'instruction*. At first he denied everything, but when the accumulated evidence was placed before him —horseshoe club, finger-prints of La Belle Lisette (which were replicas of his own), the secret message on the menu, and the wig which he had worn as Françoise the maid— he stammered helplessly, and at last gave way and related the whole story.

Shan, whose loathsome brain ever yearned for cruelty and bloodshed, but whose eyes, through slow inevitable atrophy of the nervous system, had become so sensitive that white light of any kind was torture, had taken refuge, since the capture of so many of his men, in the underground chamber. There he had conceived the idea of disguising Raoul Ladoux as a woman. No doubt the small regular features and beautiful eyes of the Apache had suggested the scheme. Ladoux was a foundling, we discovered. Heaven alone knows who the father was, but the son was undoubtedly a throwback to some aristocratic ancestor. His success as a dancer gave Shan the opportunity of obtaining the jewels his evil soul loved, and of satisfying his craving for inhuman orgies. The scarlet room in the Villa Medici had been his suggestion. M. Chapalle, madly enamoured of La Belle Lisette, had gladly carried out her wishes, and had allowed her to arrange everything, believing that he was to witness a novel dance. Shan had crept out of his hole and watched the "Dance of the Dying Dove," which ended in the death of the poor financier and the theft of his money and diamonds.

When spies warned Raoul that the police suspected La Belle Lisette, the Apache had staged the suicide and simply assumed his real sex once more. I prefer not to relate how the poor drowned girl was obtained. A description of the famous gems of Baron de Zeidler had then aroused the greed of the Spider. The Baron's horses gave Shan the idea of the club, but for once his cunning brain had failed to visualize the result. The Baron had been completely deceived by the Apache, who had entered his service disguised as a trim lady's-maid, and during his wife's absence he had invited Françoise to drink with him. The Apache had immediately seized the opportunity and drugged the wine. Intoxicated by the poisoned wine and off his guard, the Baron had unfortunately displayed his collection of gems to "Françoise." When the Baron turned to place them in the safe again Ladoux had stunned him, dragged him to the stables, and killed him with the horseshoe club.

THE Apaches captured at the Café des Amis were sent to Noumea for life for their complicity in the crime at the Villa Medici. The burglar's outfit was proven to have belonged to Julot.

Raoul Ladoux was guillotined in October, 1908. His crimes were so many and so gruesome that his counsel's plea for mercy was greeted with yells and shouts from everyone in court.

Kiki became a great favourite at headquarters and was adopted by Rousseau.

(Another thrilling article in this series will appear next month.)

Safe

by

G. R. MALLOCH

Illustrated by
S. BRIAULT

THE last customer had left the bank and Binks, the porter, had closed the heavy doors. It was always with satisfaction that the cashier heard Binks shooting the heavy bolts and turned his attention to making up his book and agreeing the cash. He was an expert, and there was seldom any difficulty about that part of the day's work; in a very short time he would be ready, with the assistance of Binks, to carry the money into the safe, while the manager stood by rattling his keys and making a perfunctory check of the bags of coin and bundles of notes. He was regarded with great favour by the bank, he knew that; he was marked for promotion and in time would be a manager himself. But he did not intend to stop at that; the head office, and perhaps, in time, the management of the bank itself, was what he aimed at and certainly might hope to attain with luck. Everybody liked him, everybody trusted him; old Mr. Harrison, who managed this branch, had implicit confidence in him.

To cherish such ambitions was all very well, he had often told himself; but every boy who entered the bank's employment had the same ideas. One must differentiate oneself from the herd; one must cultivate useful acquaintances, speak well, and above all dress well. "To him that hath shall be given" was a saying that to him embodied a great truth; one must, however, look as if one had; one must look successful as a first step to being successful. He hated the daily drudgery of the counter; he must rise far above that. And he had. He moved in the best social circle of the suburb; his carefully-cultivated friends were not among the rich tradesmen, though he employed his charm of manner with them for business reasons, but among the best people, the people who lived in the big houses, the husbands who had great businesses in the City and the smart wives who had their accounts in his bank. He had good looks and charming manners; one lady, short of a man for a little dance, suddenly thought: Why not? as she was cashing a cheque. He was asked, he went, he was a success; and after that he was constantly asked to dances and dinners and tennis parties, and became an accepted part of the local social life.

ON this particular afternoon, the relief from the strain of his task was greater than usual when the doors were closed. He had had exciting news from the manager that morning. The head office had been making inquiries as to his suitability for a more responsible post, and Mr. Harrison had given a glowing report about him, emphasizing his social qualities, a point of special importance where managerships were concerned. It was practically certain that some kind of promotion was in store for him in the near future—perhaps any day he might hear that he was to be transferred to a better post. Well, that was what he had worked for and what he had a right to expect. He went through the task of making up his cash mechanically, reflecting on these things; and, when all was ready, lit a cigarette and sat down on his stool.

Yes, everything was working out as he desired. It would be a blessed relief to get away to some bigger place, perhaps to Threadneedle Street. He would have a big increase, no doubt; perhaps it would run to a small flat in the West-end. he would meet more important people and make himself agreeable and indispensable to them, just as he had done here. He would marry a wealthy girl; he would begin to taste the good things of life. And he had nearly got himself engaged to that

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Simson girl! All right, of course, and a nice girl, with a fairly well-off father — but suburban, suburban; not the kind that could rise with him, not the woman to sit at the head of his table in Kensington. No. A nice girl, but, thank Heaven, he had not actually proposed.

Yes, everything was working out as he had planned —everything but one thing. The bag of gold—that accursed third bag, which was supposed to contain two hundred sovereigns, and actually contained fifty, plus a hundred and fifty shillings and just enough lead to make it weigh correctly on those rare occasions when Mr. Harrison took it into his head to weigh it. One couldn't easily manage a Savile Row tailor and other social expenses, such as taxis for daughters one saw home from dances, on his salary. There had been times when he was desperately hard up, when he had sat at the dinner tables of the wealthy suburbanites with scarcely sixpence in his pocket. He had had to have the money; he had borrowed a bit, little by little, paying back as he could and drawing out when he must; he had kept a sort of running account with that bag of gold, choosing it because nobody ever asked for gold nowadays, and if they did he could always open one of the others. And what luck he had had; he had even deceived the inspectors who descended on the bank occasionally—even the inspectors trusted him and had contented themselves by opening the bag, seeing that it contained gold—it did, on top—and weighing it. So far he had escaped discovery; the problem to be solved now was how to get a hundred and fifty pounds in sovereigns and replace them before he was transferred. For there was no doubt whatever that his successor would count every penny of the money he took over. And the perplexing thing was that he did not know how long he had; his promotion might come any day now.

"Do you wish to check anything, sir?" asked the cashier.

His musings were interrupted by Mr. Harrison.

"Ready, Smith?" asked the manager. "I'm in rather a hurry to-day—it's the bowling tournament, you know."

"Right, sir—sorry if I've kept you waiting," replied the cashier with a ready smile, gathering his money together. Bowling tournament! Curse this suburban-souled fellow with his bowling tournaments! Confound the man and his fat wife, so secure, so certain of local esteem, so safe; while he, with his ambitions and his great plans, stood on the brink of this precipice, where one step might take him to safety

and one miscalculation might hurl him down into the abyss of ruin and disgrace.

They stood at the door of the safe, Binks with the trolley on which the bags were piled, the cashier waiting respectfully while Mr. Harrison fumbled with the keys.

"Do you wish to check anything, sir?" asked the cashier; he was laughing inwardly at the thought of how astonished this old fool would be if he knew what was in the third bag of gold.

"No, no, Smith!" laughed the manager. "I'll take the risk—quite safe where you're concerned, eh?"

"I hope so, sir," replied the cashier, smiling.

"Fact is," went on Mr. Harrison, "I sha'n't feel so comfortable when the new man comes. Of course he will be all right, but one never knows, and it doesn't do to take any chances. Well, push it in, Binks."

And Mr. Harrison turned to the subject of the bowling tournament and his play, a subject in which he fondly believed his cashier took an interest.

TEN minutes later the cashier left the bank. The sun was bright, the street was busy, one or two of the passers-by nodded to him; he returned their greetings absently, as he lit a cigarette, his mind absorbed with the problem that faced him. Discovery—ruin! Quite impossible—that must not happen at any cost. Imagine it—perhaps in this very street, a man coming up to him and tapping him on the shoulder.

He started violently—someone had laid a hand on his arm. He swung round; it was Mr. Roberts, the butcher, reputed to be one of the richest men in Waltbury.

"'Ullo, Mr. Smith!" exclaimed the red-faced, burly Mr. Roberts. "Gave you a start, did I? Eh? What's this I hear about your leaving us?"

"How are you, Mr. Roberts?" replied the cashier, running over in his mind the figures of the butcher's bank balance. "One can't stop for ever in Waltbury, you know. It's not to be expected, and, much as I like it here, one wants to get on."

"Quite right, quite right," laughed the butcher. "Doesn't do to get in a rut, I always say, doesn't do to get in a rut. Mr. Harrison let drop a word about your going, that's 'ow I come to know. But there's many of us will be very sorry when you go, Mr. Smith, and that's a fact. Always very obliging and attentive to your customers, you've been, I must say."

"I hope we've been pretty good friends, Mr. Roberts," said the cashier, wondering whether he could borrow the money from this good-natured fool, on some excuse or another. Why not? Suppose he said he wanted to buy a house, for example? There might be some way of doing it—worth trying, anyhow, he thought, desperately. He fell into step with the butcher.

"We 'ave been pretty good friends, I hope," went on his companion, genially. "If I may say so, Mr. Smith, always having had the highest respect for you. You see, you've not been like the common run of the fellows at the bank—always superior to them and yet not stuck up like some of the young fellers. Now, what do you say to coming in and 'aving a glass of something, Mr. Smith?—I keep a good drop of liquor in the office for my friends, and I'd take it friendly if you'd join me."

"With great pleasure, Mr. Roberts," said the cashier, his brain busy spinning out the possibilities of the situation. They entered the shop, passed through it, and went into an office at the back.

The butcher produced a bottle from a cupboard and poured out two glasses of brown sherry. Each man took up his glass.

"Good health!" said the butcher, draining his at a gulp.

"Good health and prosperity to you, Mr. Roberts," said the cashier. "Though it's perhaps superfluous to wish you prosperity—eh?"

The butcher beamed at his well-dressed friend. "I've not done so badly, Mr. Smith," he said. "The missus and the kids'll never want, so far as I can see. But we're tradesfolk, and it doesn't take much to content us. Let me fill it up again," he continued, replenishing both glasses. "I must say I like a drop of sherry now and then, and I take it kindly of you to share one with me."

The cashier sipped his wine thoughtfully. Could he borrow money from this fellow? Probably, and if he once had a cheque for a hundred and fifty pounds he knew that he could get gold for it somehow in his own bank or another. Or he could get Harrison to allow him to cash it in gold and pretend to take it out of that bag.

"You are a modest man, Mr. Roberts," he said. "Of course, what one learns in the bank is strictly confidential, but between ourselves there's no harm in saying that you are one of the richest men in the town. Come, come, Mr. Roberts, you can't deceive me, you know—I know what your account is like."

Mr. Roberts was pleasantly flattered, as the other intended he should be.

"I've got a bit put away, I'll admit—and it's not all in the bank either. You bankers think you know a lot, but you don't know everything."

"Houses, eh?" said the cashier.

"Well, yes, I've got a few, I'll admit. Shares I can't abide—never did any good with shares. But me and my old woman, we believe in keeping something in the stocking like."

"You don't keep money in the house, I hope, Mr. Roberts? That's not safe, you know," said the cashier, curious to know what was coming. The butcher laughed.

"It's been safe enough these twenty years. Not if people knew about it, it wouldn't, but they don't. You didn't think you were sitting in a kind of little bank in this office, I'll bet, but you are."

"I don't see a safe," said the cashier, looking about him.

"No," said the butcher, "and there isn't one either. Don't believe in 'em—attract thieves, they do, I always say. But look 'ere—not a word—I can trust you." And he ran his hand under the window-sill beside him, pressed a concealed spring, and laughed as a piece of the woodwork rose, revealing a little cupboard, the existence of which no one would have suspected. "Made it myself," he added, proudly.

"Very ingenious," said the cashier. "May I look?" And he peered into the cupboard. In it were a number of little paper bags bearing the name of his bank. "I hope you don't keep much here?"

"I reckon to have about five hundred always on hand," said the butcher. "Never know when you might need it."

"Notes?"

"No—gold. You see, the wife and I saved most of it before the war, when there was gold about. We didn't altogether hold with banking when we started the shop, and then we had to pay for most of our stuff in cash. There's some old stuff there, but those bags on top, they're since the war. You'll have noticed I sometimes asked for gold in the bank—some I got from you and some from the other bank, and some from people in the trade. There's fifty in each of those bags."

"Well, I think you are very foolish, Mr. Roberts. If you had all that in the bank it would be earning interest for you—here it's making you nothing." He was talking for time—his mind was suddenly aflame with the idea that here lay the solution of his problem. Could he ask Roberts to lend him a hundred and fifty pounds in gold? On what pretext? Would the man not be at once suspicious at such a request from the bank cashier? Would it get to Harrison's ears?

"WILLIAM! William!" An imperious female voice came from the shop. "You're wanted. Squire Thornton wants you."

Squire Thornton was a very important customer; the butcher hurried into the shop without waiting to close his secret cupboard. At the door he turned. "Keep an eye on it for a moment, for me, Mr. Smith," he said. "And help yourself to the sherry—there's plenty more where it came from."

He went out and shut the door carefully behind him.

Smith continued to look into the cupboard. He noted that the gold was in bags of the same size, ten in number. It was damnable to see it lying there and to think that, if he could only borrow it, his danger would be at an end. But as he looked at the bags, which reminded him of the bank and its atmosphere of routine and common sense, he perceived that he could not possibly ask a customer for a loan of money. He knew the butcher's kind, how easily their suspicions were aroused, how much on guard they were where money was concerned. Roberts might refuse him—if he did, he would certainly go straight to Harrison and tell him; the result would be an immediate and thorough checking of his cash. It would not do—and yet—and yet he must have the money.

Suddenly, apparently without volition of his own, he saw his hands descend on the bags; he saw his supple fingers, with the dexterity on which he prided himself, convey three of them to his own pockets, take three from the underneath layer and arrange them so that no one would imagine that the place had been disturbed unless he took all the top bags out and found that there were three missing below.

It was all done in a moment. He turned to the table, poured out another glass of wine and gulped it down. His hands were trembling. A voice seemed to be shouting in his brain, "You are a thief—a common thief!" Somehow, borrowing from the cash at the bank had never seemed like stealing—he had only borrowed intending to repay, he had repaid and borrowed again. His luck had been against him. But there could be no repayment here. This was not borrowing.

He poured out another glass, sat down as composedly as he could, and lit a cigarette. In the shop outside he could hear a murmur of voices—the butcher was speaking at great length about something, and now and then the Squire interjected gruff monosyllables. What a time they were taking! His eyes wandered round the room; he noted the position of the window and saw that it was of frosted glass and had an ordinary catch. Suppose that window were broken, would not a burglary be the only explanation? Anyone might by searching find or stumble on the hidden cupboard.

Then suddenly he saw that he must put the money back. He could not rob this decent man who was so friendly—it was a horrible thing to do. He half rose from his chair, then hesitated as he thought of discovery at the bank. And while he was hesitating the door opened and the butcher came in. He went straight over to the secret cupboard and shut the lid down; the fastening clicked home. The cashier felt that fate had decided the thing.

The butcher winked at him. "Squire's coming in to take a glass with us," he said. "But I don't want him to see that—he'd talk—enjoy telling folk about butcher Roberts's secret hoard, and, meaning no harm, it would get about."

He went out again and returned with the Squire. The cashier had to be civil to an important customer of the bank; the three men sat talking of local affairs for a time, but as soon as he could the cashier made an excuse and got away. Once more he stood on the pavement and lit a cigarette. His head was a little confused with the wine; the only thought that it could hold was the immense thought that he was out of danger at the bank—his career was no longer threatened. Roberts had ceased to matter, the theft had ceased to matter; nothing mattered but the fact that ruin and disgrace had turned away from him for ever. He would never be such a fool again.

While he was hesitating the door

THAT evening he went down to the Conservative Club, where he knew he would find the butcher. He was in his usual corner with a group of tradesmen. The cashier sat down with them and ordered a round of drinks. He had his plans all thought out by now: it was a foggy night, and the club was only a few steps away from Mr. Roberts's shop. After a few moments' talk he exclaimed that he must go to the post-office before eight, and went out, promising to return. Leaving the club, he hurried through the empty street in which no one was stirring, and turned down an

opened and the butcher came in.

alley which ran past the side of the butcher's premises. Satisfying himself that no one was in sight, he stopped outside the frosted glass window of the office in which he had been regaled that afternoon. There he took from his pocket a stone wrapped in a handkerchief to deaden sound and struck the upper pane of the window opposite the catch. The glass broke with a little tinkle that sounded in his ears like the explosion of a bomb. For a few moments he crouched listening: no sound followed from the butcher's premises: there was no movement indicating that anyone in the adjoining houses had heard anything. He rose, and putting a hand through the broken window unfastened the catch and raised the lower half of the window as far as it would go. This done, he returned cautiously to the deserted street: there was no one in sight: he quickened his pace and made his way to the post-office, which he reached just before eight. Here he purchased some stamps, exchanged a few words with the postmaster, and returned to the club, where he rejoined the butcher and his friends.

He sat down amongst them with a sigh of relief and swallowed the unfinished drink which he had left, and called for more. He was safe now, that was certain. The butcher would discover the broken window, or the police would: a search would be made and three bags of gold would be missing. A burglary had obviously been committed — the thief had been alarmed and had snatched what he could and escaped. He, Smith, had been at the club and had only left it to go to the post-office: he had not been absent ten minutes—no suspicion could possibly attach to him. He thought it all very neat; if it ever occurred to the butcher that he had anything to do with it, which was very unlikely, here was a perfect alibi. As for the theft, that could not be helped now; Roberts could afford to lose the money; he would send it back anonymously some day, of course, and meantime his career was of more importance than a temporary loss to a man who had plenty. He spent the remainder of the evening playing bridge and made

himself very agreeable; at parting the butcher and his friends reiterated their regrets at the news of his possible departure.

IN the morning he took the gold to the bank and without any difficulty replaced the missing hundred and fifty sovereigns in the bag from which he had borrowed. He had scarcely done so when he was summoned to Mr. Harrison's room and told that he had been promoted to an important position in the head office of the bank. He was to go to Threadneedle Street two days later; the new cashier was to arrive to-morrow and work with him for a day and take over his cash. Mr. Harrison congratulated him and said that he took some pride in having trained him. All day long he was the recipient of congratulations from the other members of the staff and from customers who had heard the news; many were the expressions of regret at his approaching departure. With his usual alert manner and winning smile he thanked them all; his heart was beating exultantly; his career was safe. He had almost forgotten that he had robbed the butcher; the butcher and his affairs were matters of little moment, matters of no interest to him. And when the news of the mysterious burglary at Roberts's shop leaked out late in the day, because of the butcher's reluctance to impart the knowledge of his secret hiding-place even to the police, he heard it with perfectly simulated astonishment, and condoled with the victim gravely, adding with a shake of the head that perhaps now Mr. Roberts would see the wisdom of keeping his money in the bank.

"How do you account for the fact that the thief took only a hundred and fifty, Mr. Roberts?" he asked, leaning over the counter with an air of respectful sympathy; he was almost enjoying the comedy and was filled with a sense of his own cleverness.

"Must 'ave been disturbed by something," said the disconsolate tradesman. "Got the cupboard open, heard something, grabbed what he could, and got away through the window again—that's the police theory, Mr. Smith. But 'ow did he know where to look—that's what puzzles me."

"Probably you left your office door open one day and someone in the shop saw you at the secret cupboard, Mr. Roberts," said the cashier. "I felt a little uncomfortable myself," he added with a laugh, "when I heard of it, for I suppose I was the only man in the place besides yourself who knew about it."

The butcher laughed.

"I had no suspicions of you, Mr. Smith! If I 'ad 'ad, why, you were with us at the club all night, and the police are certain that it took place before ten o'clock. No," he added, ruefully, "I'll have to look further than you, Mr. Smith, I'm afraid. Well, I'm beginning my savings again. Give me gold for ten pounds will you, Mr. Smith, as a favour to an old customer."

The cashier could have laughed in his face.

"Certainly, Mr. Roberts," he said, taking the cheque. "Here you are! But take my advice and bring it all to the bank, where it's safe."

Mr. Roberts picked up the money and went back to his shop.

Of course he would repay the money some day; meantime he was safe and he could not help admiring his own boldness and cleverness. Theft? No, it was only a loan to be repaid at some convenient date. He was safe, he was safe, he was *safe*: the phrase kept beating in his brain like the beating of a pulse. The world was suddenly a very fine place, life was a glorious thing again; the past with its fears was like the fading memory of a dream.

NEXT day the new cashier arrived and at the close of business took over the cash. There was a full-dress checking of every item, Mr. Harrison and several members of the staff assisting. The new man was very particular: he insisted on emptying every bag of gold, silver, or copper, and having it counted; he examined all the notes, and spent so much time over it that Mr. Harrison, who was impatiently waiting to get away to the bowling tournament, grew very restless.

"I don't think you need be so very particular, Mr. Peters," said the manager. "If there ever was a man you would be safe to take over from, it is Mr. Smith."

"I dare say, sir," replied the new man, "I dare say—but you never know, you never know. If there was anything wrong, you would call me a fool, would you not?"

"I certainly should, Mr. Peters," said the cashier, gravely. "Take your time—you can't be too careful to please me. I should do the same in your place."

And he laughed to himself. If this had been a few days earlier! And now he was safe, safe, safe!

AT four o'clock he was finished. He had said good-bye to everyone except Mr. Harrison, who was closeted in his room with a stranger who had come in, probably on private business. He wasn't going to bother himself about Mr. Harrison — probably see him later in the evening—and they had practically said good-bye already.

"How do you account for the fact that the thief took only a hundred and fifty?" asked the cashier.

He put on his hat and coat, took a last look round the office, and went to the door. Binks came forward to open it and wish him good-bye. He shook hands with Binks—he felt benevolently disposed towards the old duffer, and gave him a ten-shilling note. Then, bowed out respectfully, he heard the heavy door shut behind him for the last time. As before, he paused on the pavement to light a cigarette and look up and down the street. To-night he would be out of this for ever. Already the scene began to look strange and small and paltry: the narrow street, the little shops, the dowdy-looking people. To-morrow he would be in the great city, beginning a great career. He felt no regrets: he was conscious of superior abilities and great talents for which there was no scope here. He told himself with assurance that he had been perfectly justified in the step he had taken to preserve those talents and abilities for the good of the country; he knew that he was capable of great things, and that the world would not be the worse of his life when it was over. And he was safe, he was certain of that; what he had done could never be found out. Even the stone he had used he had thrown into the river and the handkerchief he had burned. He was safe. He drew a great breath and stepped out.

As he did so, a hand was laid on his arm. He swung round to face Inspector Davis, of the police.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Smith," said the Inspector. "But, you see, Mr. Roberts and his wife always scratched a little R on each sovereign as they put it away. You cashed a cheque for him to-day, and paid him with his own money."

The Stars in their Courses

By

JOHN HASTINGS TURNER

Illustrated by
JOHN CAMPBELL

HE was, as he was frequently called, a "rare bird." A genuine artist, and an impresario at the same time. It caused him real distress to produce at his theatre any play which fell short of his own ideals of what a play should be. He had lost money, without wincing, upon many productions the merits of which had not been in the least affected, in his eyes, by their failure to attract. In some cases, persuaded against his better judgment, he had made money which it gave him no pleasure to collect. He knew little of acting, a great deal about literature, and his taste was infallible. They called him "Dandy Fairmile" at his club, but it was his mind and not his appearance which had earned him the sobriquet. They spoke confidently of a knighthood for the "Dandy" in the near future, and, curiously enough, Fairmile coveted that knighthood. It was not that he took any pleasure in the title itself, but the idea of some crown to his activities other than money attracted him by reason of what he called its Greek simplicity. As for Helen Fairmile, his wife, and the leading lady at his theatre, it attracted her because, as she said frankly enough, she was sufficiently childish to enjoy the idea of being addressed as Lady Fairmile. He laughed at her and started upon the familiar, "A rose by any other name——"

She protested.

"Oh, come, Charlie," she said, "surely you can do better than that?"

"I do not see," he answered, "why I should be expected to improve upon Shakespeare."

They were on the best of terms, these two. She admitted freely to him that her own feelings, as far as art was concerned at least, were not as sensitive as his. She explained that she was in more direct touch with the public than was he, and she admitted that the frantic applause at a mechanically-built-up "curtain" or the trick of a "theatrical" line pleased and delighted her.

"I shouldn't be any good as an actress," she used to say, "if I didn't feel like that."

And he was inclined to agree with her on the point. Yet, with unusual restraint and far sight, she never attempted to force him to put on a play merely for her own exploitation.

On one particular part, in a play sent to her some six months back, she had, however, set her heart. She had read it, and in the flamboyant, cleverly-contrived theatrical situations she had "seen herself" at once. But even as she thrilled to the acting opportunities of the manuscript she knew that this was precisely the kind of play which Charlie would hate. She handed it over to him, however, merely remarking that it contained a wonderful part for her. He read it, and he saw, from the point of view of which she was speaking, that she was right. But the play seemed to him banal, tawdry, without one touch of nature or even art, unless an expertness in theatrical tricks can be so dignified. He told her his opinion and she smiled and sighed.

"Wonderful part for me," she said.

"My dear child," he returned, "I admit that, in a cinematograph kind of way, you are right. But what of the play? It contains not one original viewpoint, not even one original trick. What would the critics say of me when this was unfolded to them on one of my first nights?"

"Oh, I know, I know," she answered.

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"But they'd probably say I'd saved the play, and that *is* so nice!" Then she laughed merrily, and so did he.

"Quite apart from anything else," he said, as he laid the manuscript upon his desk, "quite apart from anything else, this would cost me about ten thousand pounds to do. The way I should have to do it to keep even the smallest shreds of my reputation."

"Oh, well," replied his wife, "I'm sure you're right. But I'd like to read it again; it's fun to picture oneself in those 'unnaturally wonderful' situations and those lovely dresses. I adore the Tudor period, you know."

She had taken the play away with her, and she never mentioned it to him again. But he knew that she would have liked to play that gaudy part more than anything she had yet done. Not that she made herself unhappy or sulky about it. Her nature was much like a well-dispositioned child's. If she saw a toy in the shop window and was told she couldn't have it, she said: "Oh, well!" and went away and played with something else. Dandy Fairmile did not deceive himself in the matter of his wife. He knew that she was one in a million, and he loved her with the deep and quiet passion which is the manner of the sensitive.

AND now he sat in the consulting-room of the great specialist and stared at the thick Turkey carpet without seeing anything at all. What was it the suave but kind voice had just said?

"I am afraid, Mr. Fairmile, that it would not be right of me to disguise from you that your wife's condition is very serious."

That was all he had said; enough, however, to cause Dandy Fairmile's brain to

"I am afraid, Mr. Fairmile, that it would not be right of me to disguise from you that your wife's condition is very serious."

stop completely for some seconds as he stared at the carpet pattern. A mild feeling of tiredness, that was all, stretching over some months. And then, in a light-hearted way: "Better see the best man, my dear, and be made well at once." And now, straight out of the blue, so to speak, this. Well, he must pull himself together. He must know the truth, whatever it was.

"When you say 'serious,'" he asked, "what exactly do you mean?"

The doctor stroked his beard gently.

"Doctors are not infallible," he said, softly.

"I know that," answered Fairmile, roughly, and then, quickly apologizing, added: "I'm sorry."

The great specialist nodded. Fairmile squared his shoulders.

"I'm not a child, Sir Frederick," he said. "I want the whole truth as far as you can surmise it."

THE keen eyes of the specialist looked into his closely: looked at him for a long time in a way which, in the ordinary affairs of life, would have been considered unpardonably rude. At last Sir Frederick leaned back in his chair; with his left hand he started to play with a green bronze lizard upon his desk.

"You will understand, Mr. Fairmile," he said, "that we have to study not only our patients, but those to whom our opinion of our patients may mean so much. It is not everybody to whom a doctor can tell the truth, without making another patient. I think you are one of the few."

"I hope so," said Fairmile. "I hate drugs." He had a definite sensation of holding reins very tight upon every nerve in his body.

"Very well," said the other. "In my opinion—and I want to impress upon you that it is *only* my opinion—Mrs. Fairmile cannot live very long."

Fairmile discovered himself nodding. He discovered it as he might have discovered a twitching muscle.

"When you say that," he heard himself saying, "how long exactly do you mean?"

"You're asking a great deal, Mr. Fairmile," answered the doctor. "I don't want you to believe in me too much."

"Even so," replied the Dandy, "I should value your opinion."

The man with the beard and the quiet, drawn face above it stretched out a hand over his desk. It looked as if he had rung a bell, but no bell sounded. He turned to the impresario.

"My opinion," he said, "and it's *only* my opinion, which, I assure you, has been proved wrong many times——"

"Yes," muttered the other, "but you are the big man. Well?"

"Six months—or eight." The specialist looked keenly at his questioner. Perhaps he had had theatrical folk before and had expected a breakdown. Fairmile said nothing. He only nodded, and with his little finger drew down his lower lip—a trick of his at rehearsals and, curiously enough, now.

A white-jacketed attendant brought in two brandies-and-sodas. So Sir Frederick *had* rung the bell, after all. The husband managed a smile.

"Good of you," he said, "but I don't need it. In big things I like to imagine that my brain is working clean."

"My own," said Sir Frederick, pushing his glass to the back of his desk, "was merely good manners; though I would like you to believe that I am not sufficiently inhuman to say what I have said to you without distress."

Fairmile nodded.

"A doctor," he said, "sees vaguely all that lies behind. All I can do now is to thank you for your frankness."

"I want you," replied the specialist, "to remember that my opinion is only my opinion." He told Fairmile, shortly and unintelligibly to him, the nature of the illness as he saw it. He added that he would like Fairmile to take other opinions. The impresario shrugged his shoulders. He had gone to the man whose knowledge upon this particular case was unique. He placed his five guineas unobtrusively upon Sir Frederick's desk. The whole room seemed to him suddenly inhuman and *macabre*. He found the doctor's hand in his, at the door.

Sir Frederick pushed the notes and silver into a drawer of his desk. Then he sighed and looked at the picture of his wife which smiled at him from the wall. She was all right—going to a dance that night; going to enjoy herself. He sighed again. What a question of minutes life seemed to be! And that poor devil who had just gone—well, he had told him the truth as far as he knew it. One could do no more. But what a life his was! He was hardly expected to be human. A stiffly-starched nurse entered with a curt knock.

"Mrs. Entwaring, Sir Frederick?" she asked. He nodded. He knew Mrs. Entwaring. A source of five guineas about every six weeks. Fake nerves. Well, if they liked it—— Any number of doctors would have put her in a pet home and made a nice little piece "on the side." But that was not Sir Frederick. He would listen to her and give her ten minutes of his time, and he would put her five guineas into the

"Look here," he said. "About that play, 'The Red Viper'—I'm not sure I won't do it."

"Oh, Charlie," she cried, "do you mean it? What a thrill!"

drawer of his desk with none of the emotions which accompanied the last.

Fairmile found Helen smiling to him in the waiting-room, and together they went out to the car.

"Five guineas!" she laughed. "And he's going to give me some silly little pills!"

"Well, my dear," he answered, "if they do you good it's value for money." He realized with a sudden jump of the heart that he would have to go on saying things like that, and in that tone, until the end.

After lunch he went to his study and tried to restore equilibrium to his mind. He, whose life had been so delicately planned, so successfully sketched in, had now been caught up in the world's mesh of misery. It was his business then to fight the thing in so far as it was possible to fight an enemy certain of victory in the end. At least he must see that Helen was amazingly happy until that end.

He went back again to the drawing-room, where she sat with her feet over the arms of her chair, a child-like favourite attitude.

"Did Sir Frederick put any restrictions on what you could do, dear?" he asked.

"None at all," she answered. "He said I could do anything."

"Of course he did," thought Fairmile. "What can it matter?"

"Well, look here," he said. "About that play, 'The Red Viper'—I'm not sure I won't do it."

She sat upright in her chair, her eyes glistening.

"Oh, Charlie," she cried, "do you mean it? What a thrill!"

"Yes," he nodded. "And, what's more, I'll go the limit on it. I'll put on a costume play in a way they've never seen it done before."

She clapped her hands like a child, and the sound of it was like a blow to him.

"What made you change your mind about the play?" she asked.

"I've thought it over," he lied, "and I don't see why we shouldn't make something of it."

She flung her arms about his neck.

"Oh, I am so happy!" she told him, and as she kissed him he stared over her shoulder at a long blank corridor of years to come. They took down the costume-books from the shelves, and she spent long hours over them with him, or alone—while he wrestled with the MS. and wondered what he could do to make the play seem less banal than it was.

Rehearsals came on, and Helen flung herself delightedly into the work. Those who loved the theatre, and even critics, told each other with keen anticipation that Fairmile had another "show" in rehearsal. Meanwhile, its producer simulated enthusiasm for the lines he knew to be trite, and the situations he knew to be laboured and unnatural. At least, he thought, he could spend himself upon the decoration of the piece, and at least Helen was happy. So happy and in such high spirits that he paid a second visit—this time alone—to the great Sir Frederick and asked him what it meant.

"I am afraid," was the answer, "that the present condition is not unusual. I should like to be able to say that it was, but my opinion remains the same."

"Then the end will come suddenly?"

"Comparatively, yes," he answered.

The Dandy went back to his theatre and flung himself once more into the turmoil of rehearsals. On the opening night the public were enthusiastic. Helen took twelve calls. She had become a gallery goddess. And on their way home Fairmile pretended to share in her delight and enthusiasm. But he had seen the critics gathered together between the acts, and he knew what they were saying.

ON the next day they said it. They praised the acting of Miss Fairmile without reserve, but the play they damned, and even went so far as to hint that Fairmile was "losing his touch." At his clubs his friends avoided speaking of the production, or else rallied the Dandy about it, asking him whether it was true that his next was to be a musical comedy. Fairmile laughed and pretended to enjoy their quips. He found now that his whole life was a pretence. At home, in his theatre, everywhere. And if there was one abomination he held intolerable it was the abomination of pretence. But Helen was happy, and that was all that mattered. Even when he overheard two men in the smoking-room speaking of him "letting down his theatre"—"the one man in the profession who had some kind of standard"—and when he left the room with rage in his heart, he thought of Helen's radiant face as she set out to the theatre at night, her eager return with the news of the public's unabated adoration of her, and he became calm. But he seldom went down to his theatre himself. He could not bear to witness the tawdry story unfold itself again, and still less could he bear to see the smug face of the man in the box-office. It seemed like a contradiction of everything which he held dear, everything, that is, except one. It seemed worse than that, for he had contradicted himself. And the play, of course, was a phenomenal success. It looked like running indefinitely—or, at least, until—— And there he stopped. Until the

end: and he saw it as the end of everything.

The months crept on, and the play showed no signs of flagging, though they ran into a heat-wave in July which proved the knock-out to several established successes. Fairmile met a theatre magnate in the street, who slapped him on the back with a smile which was intended to be hearty but which could never get beyond the crafty stage.

"Well, Fairmile," he said, in his loud, rough voice, "you've beaten us all this time. I knew you'd have to come down to the muck-writers in the end."

It was gall, but Fairmile managed to smile and nod. Worse still, there were those who said that it was obvious that Helen Fairmile had driven her husband into producing the thing, and this gossip, somehow or other, hurt Fairmile more than anything else. It was a thrust at the perfect relationship between himself and his wife, and it was a thrust which could not be parried, a challenge which could not even be taken up.

AND still the months crept on, and the fear which was always at the Dandy's heart became a live thing which could not leave him even for a minute. When he looked at Helen, radiant, flushed with her success, happier than he had ever known her, he could hardly believe that any day, any hour now, would come collapse and death. The eight months given by Sir Frederick passed and still there was no sign. Fairmile paid another visit to the doctor. Sir Frederick shrugged his shoulders. "One cannot predict these things to the day, Fairmile," he said.

"You are not surprised?" questioned the other.

"It is longer than I anticipated," answered the doctor, guardedly.

The play ran for a year and looked like running for two more. A wild hope sprang suddenly into Fairmile's brain. It happened in a flash, like seeing a familiar situation from a completely new angle, for he had, somehow or other, never visualized before the possibility that Sir Frederick's diagnosis might have been wrong. Now his whole being leapt to the idea. Why not? Had not the doctor himself impressed upon him that the faculty was not infallible? That was a matter of form, of course, and Sir Frederick himself had no doubt about the matter, but——

He went to Helen and said: "What about letting Sir Frederick have another look at you, dear?"

She stared at him in smiling astonishment.

"What ever for?" she asked. "I'm as fit as a fiddle." But as he seemed so anxious for her to go, she laughed and kissed him, calling him a quaint old fuss-pot, but promised to go.

While she was dressing after the examination, Fairmile sat once more alone opposite the famous doctor, and noticed, with his eye for detail, that the great man still played with the green bronze lizard on his desk.

"Yes, Mr. Fairmile," he was saying, "it is no use my being anything but perfectly frank with you. My diagnosis was wrong. The thing has dispersed. There is no reason why Mrs. Fairmile should not live another forty years."

The Dandy experienced a sensation that he had been inflated with some mysterious gas which made his whole being lighter than air. Or as if a black curtain had been raised suddenly from before his eyes. Certainly he saw his surroundings in different colours. Even the sombre consulting-room seemed pleasant and even gay.

"I cannot tell you," the doctor went on, "how sorry I am to have been the cause of all the misery and pain you must have suffered during the past year."

Fairmile smiled.

"Perhaps," he said, "it is good for the soul."

"Not many men," answered Sir Frederick, "would be inclined to look upon it from that point of view."

Helen entered the room.

"Well," she asked, "does Sir Frederick give me a clean crime-sheet?"

"Perfectly," bowed the doctor.

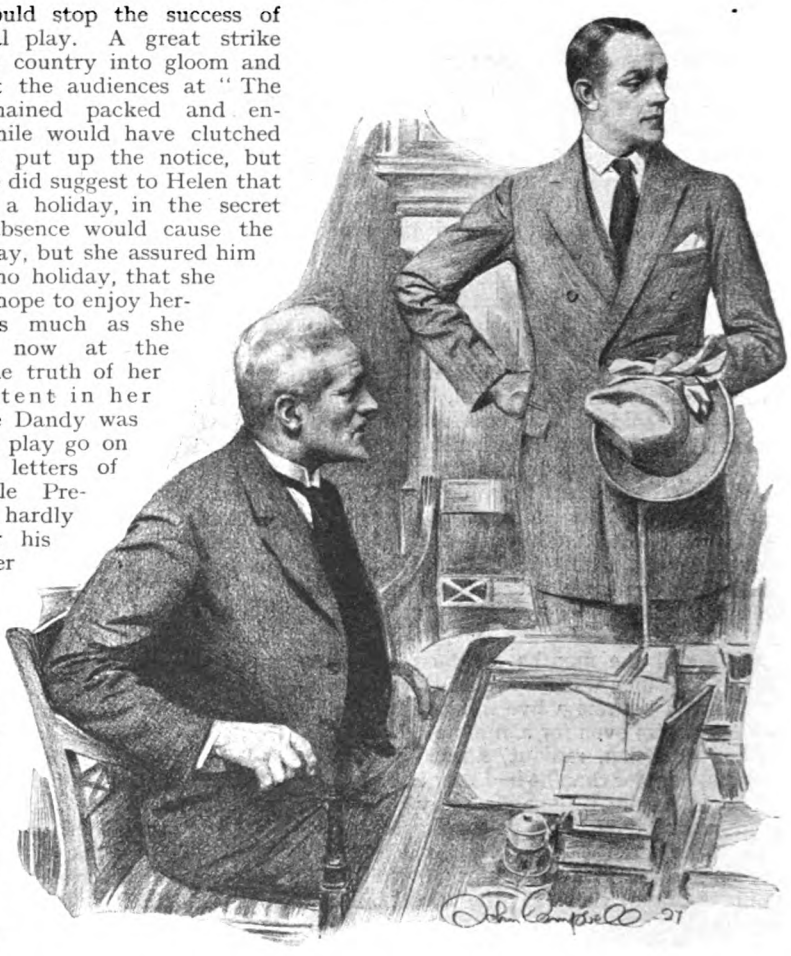
He waved away his fee, but Helen showed the dawning of surprise, and Fairmile laid it on the table.

Outside she said to him:—

"Well, dearest, are you satisfied now?"

"Perfectly," he answered. Somehow he could hardly believe the truth of what had been told to him. He had to keep on looking at her, as if to make sure of her resurrection. When she had gone down to the theatre that night, the mere fact that she was out of his sight made him restless, a prey once more to these ridiculous doubts. So nearly did the thing seem a miracle to him. He even went so far as to go to the telephone, determined to ring up Sir Frederick and hear his voice saying it all over again. But he saw suddenly that he was being childish, and he went down to the theatre instead.

But there, even in his exalted state of mind, the horror of that intolerable play, stamped as it were with his imprimatur, gripped him all over again. And he had sacrificed his reputation—worse still, his ideals—for nothing. Or had it been for the sake of another ideal?



NOTHING would stop the success of that infernal play. A great strike plunged the country into gloom and apprehension, but the audiences at "The Red Viper" remained packed and enthusiastic. Fairmile would have clutched at any excuse to put up the notice, but none offered. He did suggest to Helen that she should have a holiday, in the secret hope that her absence would cause the downfall of the play, but she assured him that she needed no holiday, that she couldn't possibly hope to enjoy herself anywhere as much as she enjoyed herself now at the theatre. And the truth of her words was patent in her appearance. The Dandy was forced to see the play go on under the great letters of "Charles Fairmile Presents——" He hardly ever went near his theatre now, never unless business made it imperative. Helen noticed this, and, thinking that he was tired, asked him whether he had been overworking. He laughed.

"What have I got to overwork at?" he said. "This play of yours seems to be going to run for ever."

She thought then that it was the need for something to work his brain on that was fretting him, and suggested that he should put up some *matinées* of an abstruse play which she knew he was anxious to do. But he shook his head. It appeared to him that to return to his old style, in the afternoons only, would throw even more into relief the glaring atrocity of the evening.

One night, as she left the stage after the curtain of the first act, Helen saw a large bearded man in evening dress standing by the switchboard, talking to an old gentleman. As she passed them on the way to her dressing-room she caught some words of the big man.

"Well," he said, "I should never have thought it of Fairmile. Cheap, easy stuff. He's done for himself as a serious artiste. The only one we had, too. It's a crime."

Helen moved on. So that was what people were saying, those people whose opinion Charles valued, who were his friends. Why, then, had he put the play on? Charlie, so inflexible as a rule that it had never entered her head to doubt him when he told her he had changed his mind about "The Red Viper."

Although she herself was not built in the mould to suffer the finer tortures of the temperament susceptible to refined artistic impression, she knew that he was, and that, even more than criticisms he might have heard, the deliberate falling below the level he set himself would be real torment to Dandy Fairmile.

That night, after the theatre, direct, as was her method, she went to him in the study.

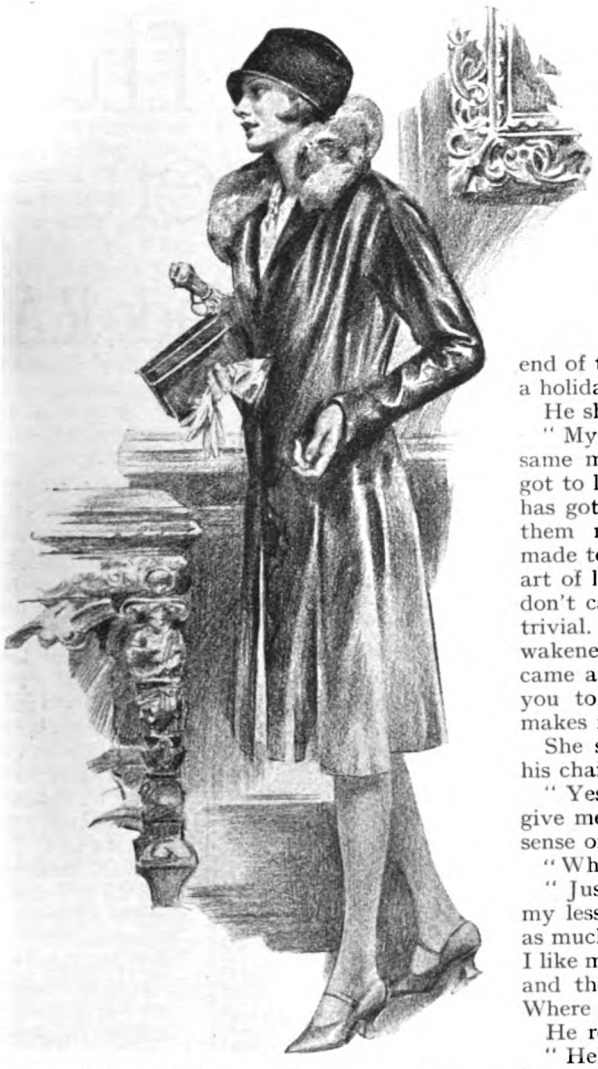
"Why did you put on 'The Red Viper'?" she asked.

He started.

"What do you mean, dear?" he replied.

"You hate it, don't you?"

"I think you are exquisite in the part," he parried.



"Well," asked Helen, "does Sir Frederick give me a clean crime-sheet?"

But she was not to be put off, and gradually, almost as if he had done something of which he ought to be ashamed, he told her the truth.

"And, my dear," he concluded, "I *am* ashamed. I'm ashamed of feeling even a little tiny bit miserable about it. Because all those months I thought of nothing but you—there was nothing but you in my life—and that is what I want it always to be. The rest doesn't count."

For some moments she said nothing, her eyes veiled and glistening.

"You've had a rotten time, Charlie," she said at last, "and I've had my innings." Then she left him.

The next day she told him she was leaving the play at the end of the week, that she found she wanted a holiday after all.

He shook his head.

"My darling," he said, "I'm not just the same man as I was before I was told I'd got to lose you. I think my sense of values has got readjusted a bit. One's apt to get them muddled, you know, when life is made too easy. It's you I care about. The art of life with you. I swear to you that I don't care for the rest. It all seems rather trivial. I was only quite certain that I'd wakened to the truth of things when you came and talked to me last night. I want you to go on being happy; that's what makes me happy."

She smiled and sat down on the arm of his chair.

"Yes, dear," she said, "but you don't give me credit for having such a thing as a sense of values, do you?"

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Just that I feel the same as you—that my lesser ambitions in the theatre are just as much a second string as your higher ones. I like my part in *our* play best of all, Charlie, and the next scene of that is on holiday. Where shall we set it?"

He rose.

"Helen," he said, with the queer, quivering smile which she knew meant that he appreciated some work of art which he had suddenly seen. "Helen, we are a pair of great artists!"

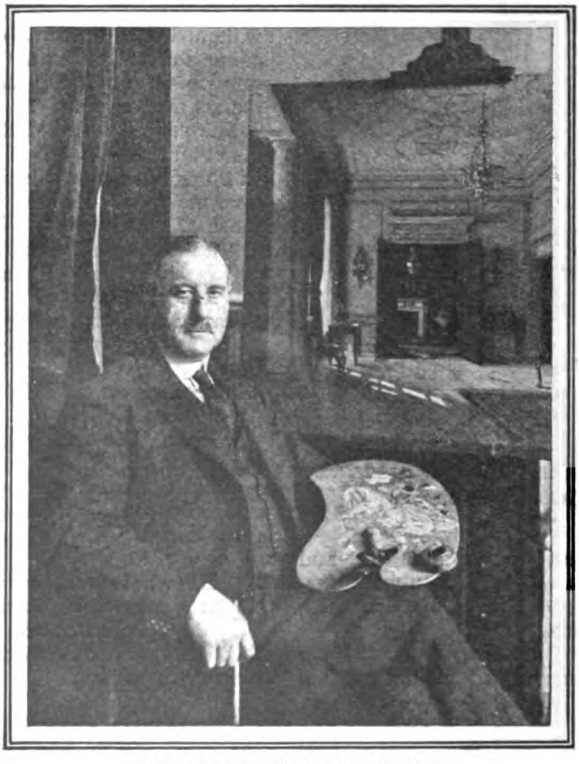
THE whole world was open to them, but they went to Southend for their holiday, because, as Helen said, to be happy there would prove that they really *were* great artists.

How I Painted The King and Queen

An Interview with Mr. Richard Jack, R.A.

By
ARTHUR LAWRENCE

MR. RICHARD JACK, R.A., is one of the great portrait-painters of to-day. Born in Sunderland in 1866, he studied at the York School of Art and won a scholarship to South Kensington in his twentieth year. At South Kensington he gained the gold medal travelling scholarship, and afterwards continued his studies in Paris at the Académie Julian; was *hors concour* 1890 and 1891, winning two medals in each year. Since then he has exhibited regularly at the Royal Academy and at Liverpool, Pittsburg, and Rome. He was elected R.A. in 1920. His painting, "Rehearsal with Nikisch," was purchased under the terms of the Chantrey Bequest for the nation in 1912, and is now among the British masterpieces at the Tate Gallery.



MR. RICHARD JACK, R.A.

Mr. Richard Jack is, in the old phrase, a personable man, over six feet in height, and well built in proportion. Moreover, he has contrived to reach the age of sixty-one years without being interviewed by the Press. He is well content to be known by his work. Yet there is a camaraderie between the users of the pen and the brush, and I am under a great obligation to him for consenting to break his rule, more especially at a time when he is about to leave England for a visit to Canada and the United States, and every moment is precious.

It seems to correspond with the fitness of things that an artist doing big work should live in a dignified house, and the house occupied by the artist and his family at the corner of Earl's Court Square has that character; but it was not until Mr. Jack had been kind enough to accord me a second "sitting" that I discovered it had been honoured by a visit from the King and Queen.

The graciousness of that visit, which expressed such a kindly consideration for

the artist's desire to complete the portrait of the King in the more favourable lighting conditions of the studio, does nothing to detract from, but assuredly greatly adds to, the dignity of the Throne.

Mr. Jack's studio is on the ground floor, and the house runs such a long way back that you feel as if you are taking part in a procession by the time the maid has ushered you into the presence of Mr. Jack.

"Yes," said my host, when I had remarked on this fact, "it is a fairly long hall, and it has this advantage, that, by opening the door of the studio and going to the front door, I am able to see how my work on the easel looks at a distance. That is the great test—the test of long vision is of the utmost importance.

"How did I first come by the honour of painting the portraits of the King and Queen and Princess Mary? It began by my receiving a commission from Mr. Waldron, the Mayor of Fulham, to do a portrait of the King for the Fulham Town Hall. I had to content myself with working from photographs, but was able to secure the loan of the requisite robes so as to be correct in all details. Then came the time when I was granted an audience by His Majesty, at Buckingham Palace, so that he might see—and perhaps approve of—what I had done. To me it was a novel and exciting experience. His Majesty was very kindly about it, and then, to my delight, he

H.M. THE KING.

His Majesty so much approved of this portrait by Mr. Jack that it was arranged that he should acquire the original, and the artist executed a replica for the Mayor of Fulham, who had commissioned the picture.

H.M. THE QUEEN.

"In the company of the Queen no one could fail to be fully conscious of being in the presence of the First Lady in the land, and yet her kindness and her geniality are so sincere that you are always made to feel at your ease."

exclaimed: 'But wouldn't you like a sitting?' No sooner had I tried to express the gratitude which I felt at the suggestion than His Majesty said: 'Very well, then, I can give you a sitting this afternoon.' And so, through His Majesty's kindness, I was able to give the painting that vital resemblance which can only be gained by working from life. The King so much approved of it that Mr. Waldron agreed that His Majesty should have the original, and Mr. Waldron commissioned me to do a replica for him to present to the Council. I did another replica for the Junior Constitutional Club.

"I should like to interpolate here that the Mayor and Council handled the portrait remarkably well. There are many owners of pictures who should go and study the excellent way in which the royal portrait is lighted. There is not one picture in a thousand which is lighted correctly. The portrait hangs in the Council Chamber, behind the mayoral chair. A canopy was made for it, in dark walnut, with crimson draperies. The canopy is pierced, the lights are hidden, and shine on the picture at such an angle that the whole picture is displayed in an even light, an effect which is very seldom attained. People think that the arm of a light is an ugly thing and so it becomes very shortened, with the result that there is a glare on the head of a portrait, and all the rest goes for nothing.

THE CHINESE ROOM, BUCKINGHAM PALACE.

This picture and that on the next page have a double interest, for they not only reveal glimpses of the marvellous State Rooms of Buckingham Palace, but also display Mr. Jack's artistic skill in other work than portraiture.

"I don't think I have told you before that, in addition to the sitting at Buckingham Palace, the King 'sat' for me—or, more strictly, 'stood' for me—here." This information gave me a thrill, compared with which all other thrills are mere fustian affairs. Can the reader imagine opening his front door and perceiving his Sovereign and the Queen-Empress—— But I must not interrupt Mr. Jack.

"I thought His Majesty was coming alone, but he was accompanied by the Queen, who strolled about and looked at the pictures in the studio here while I was working, and seemed to be quite interested in everything.

"No, I think on their journey here their Majesties escaped recognition. They came along from the Palace in a closed car, and their arrival was unnoticed, but of course the car bore the royal arms and—as the sitting took up more than an hour—by the time the royal visitors left quite a crowd had gathered around.

"And, what was more, there was a little girl from nowhere on the doorstep, with a few daffodils in her hand to present to Her Majesty. You can imagine the charmingly maternal way in which the Queen accepted the offering, and how that remembrance will live with that little girl for the rest of her life.

"For my portrait of the Queen—which was exhibited in this year's Academy—Her Majesty accorded me no fewer than eight sittings at Buckingham Palace. They took place in the White Room, which is one of the suite of State Apartments and is the nearest state room to their Majesties' own private rooms, so that Her Majesty, after robing for the portrait, did not have to walk a great distance. Unless I was working on the head alone, Her Majesty always wore the dress in which I was painting her, even if my portrait had not reached the stage where details had become essential. The royal principle of 'thorough' always prevails.

"In the company of the Queen no one could fail to be fully conscious of being in

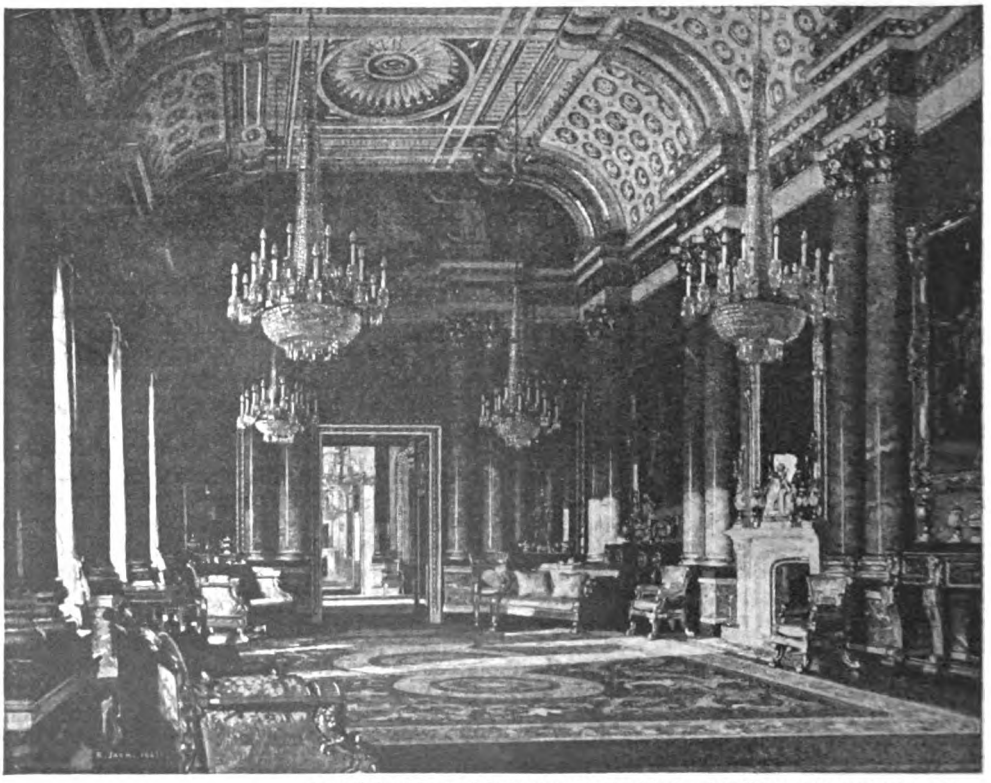
the presence of the First Lady in the land, and yet her kindness and her geniality are so sincere that you are always made to feel at your ease. Never did Her Majesty give the slightest indication that the strain of posing was any trouble to her. Her perfect amiability never failed, and the feeling that she liked the picture was, of course, a very great aid to one's work. Nervous folk cease to be embarrassed or self-conscious in the royal presence, owing to the positively magical gift which is possessed by the King and the Queen for imparting joy and confidence to those who are with them.

"During these sittings, which most folk would have found very tiring, the Queen would talk on various matters. Then, in about an hour's time, one of her ladies-in-waiting would come in, and passages from *The Times* would be read aloud and a general discussion would take place on current events. Her Majesty is greatly interested in public affairs and, with her keen understanding, is able to touch off a situation in a neat phrase.

"At the time I was painting her portrait the Queen was following the news of the journeyings of her son, the Duke of York, and the Duchess; but literature, and even politics, was often discussed. Her Majesty is very diverse in her interests and is blessed with that royal memory—that family gift—which seizes hold and never lets go. When I realized what a vast number of people of every class are entertained by their Majesties at all sorts of functions, it seemed amazing how well they remember names and faces, and the subjects which interest those particular people. They say that the King, when he has once met anyone and heard the name, never forgets. Multiply that by thousands of instances, and one is bound to be astonished at such an achievement."

Apart from his work, Mr. Jack has two recreations, singing and golf. One need not suppose that there is any close relation between the two, although it may be that his comments—if any—after making his stroke can be heard farther than most, for he possesses a "basso cantante" voice, which he used in concerts for charity during the war with great effect.

Mr. Jack's fame as a vocalist must have



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THE BLUE DRAWING ROOM, BUCKINGHAM PALACE.

Another example of Mr. Jack's talent for interior painting.

H.R.H. PRINCESS MARY.

From an unfinished portrait, here published for the first time.

become known to Her Majesty, for, with his daughter, Miss Doris Jack, he was invited—if that is the word—to give a little concert at Buckingham Palace, which duly took place in the White Drawing Room, with Her Majesty present. The Queen seemed quite pleased with the songs that were given, but one had to press Mr. Jack a good deal to learn that he had delivered himself of " Spanish Gold," " Over the Mountains," and " The Girl in Kildare."

Perceiving that I was rather puzzled about the suite of rooms at Buckingham Palace, Mr. Jack explained: " There is what one might term a string of rooms, communicating with big folding doors which extend from the entrance to the Picture Gallery. First there is a charming little private drawing-room, containing some fine Italian pictures, and then come the State Rooms—viz., the White Drawing Room, Music Room, Blue Drawing Room, the Dining Room, and then the Ball Room or Throne Room. When a Court is held, all the huge folding-doors are thrown open and the procession is made from the White Room and then through the other rooms until the Throne Room is reached.

" Well," said Mr. Jack, who has about a dozen portraits to finish, including a truly exquisite one of the Princess Mary, before he leaves England for Canada, " I don't think I can tell you much more, though I should like to say that their Majesties are exceptionally keen, shrewd, and very catholic judges of art, and are far better informed and have a more cultured taste than those alleged experts, those masters of jargon, who profess to tell the artist what he should do and what he should like. In fact," he continued, " I may add that at Buckingham Palace, apart from the magnificent collection of pictures, all the furniture, curios, lacquer, antiques, and the rest have been selected and arranged in a way which fully reflects the cultured taste of those who control it."

When I left Mr. Jack my mind was full of his strong and beautiful work, of the great personalities whom we revere, and of the glory of Empire, but I felt that the " high light " in this immense canvas was provided by the little girl on the doorstep.

EXPERIENCES OF
A BOND STREET JEWELLER

Playing the Game

By

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

Illustrated by
STANLEY LLOYD

I.

SOME wit remarked: "England is a little island, separated from the rest of the world by an immense gulf called 'cricket.'"

Mrs. Corwen and I had a little tiff and turn over this remark, which I took to be allusive. The wife, I may say *en passant*, denies me a sense of humour. That's as may be. She contends that the remark is robbed of its point and pith if it is not taken literally. I prefer to believe that the wit meant that our splendid isolation was due to the fact that in the ordinary conduct of life we, as a nation, play up and play the game. Cricket as a game has never appealed to me, simply because I am short-sighted and cannot see the pitch of the ball. As a boy I made a disheartening collection of ducks' eggs and was bored to extinction in the long field.

However, the discussion led, incidentally, to my setting down this experience, which I may admit frankly was not one of my happiest. Mrs. Corwen said to me: "Alfred, why don't you tell the world how you tried to play up and play the game—and lost it?"

I replied:—

"Thank you, I will."

This experience happened before I was married, and donkeys' years before I became a partner in our establishment. A fool, certainly not a wit, said that "Youth must be served." A sensible man would have said: "Youth must serve." I had just begun my apprenticeship behind the counter when the incidents I am about to relate took place. I had started my professional life as a "sweeper-up" in the room where gems were set. Each night the dust is purified. There is always gold in it, and occasionally tiny gems. For ten years I remained in the gem-setting department. Old Rappington, the father of my present partner, took a "shine" to me. One day he said: "Alf, I want you behind the counter. You know your job; you can tell the tale." I was not too well pleased, because my own job interested me, but I was offered a better salary. When I asked our Chief, hesitatingly, for his reasons, he laughed. "You have a pleasant way with you, Alf. You are going to make more money for me selling stuff than making it." So I did what he asked. His advice to me may be set down. I have used the same words again and again to our young salesmen: "Never coax a customer to buy what he or she doesn't want. Do your best to sell them what they do want; consult their taste, not your own. If you satisfy them, they will call again."

I am writing now of the early 'nineties—thirty years ago and more. I can't remember when the Sherlock Holmes stories took the reading world by storm, but I do recall gobbling them up greedily—and asking for more. I was leading a dull life, working hard, with little money to spend on amusements. I followed breathlessly the thrilling adventures of Holmes and, like ten thousand other young men, fondly believed that, given the opportunity, I, if you please, could

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unravel the tangled skein of crime by adopting the methods of the famous detective. Being a fool, I bought a pound of shag tobacco.

Opportunity presented itself.

II.

FOR a while I worked under other salesmen, watching their methods and learning their " patter." There were certain rules written and unwritten. In such an immense establishment ordinary trinkets were not placed in the strong-room at night; they were locked up in their show-cases. A night-watchman was on duty from closing time till opening time. He was something of a character and had been with us for many years. We had never been disturbed by burglars. Policemen, of course, patrol Bond Street. Each salesman carried a key to his show-cases. The keys were handed over at closing time to the head clerk, who distributed them next morning. The partners had duplicate keys. There was a general stocktaking twice a year, but each salesman was supposed to look over his stock just before he locked up his cases. Hunting men tell me that a professional huntsman, after long practice, can tell at a glance whether a hound is missing out of the pack. Speaking for myself, I can say that I acquired this knack with my rings in, say, three years. Almost unconsciously I knew when one was out of place. But at first I had to take extraordinary pains and precautions, if a customer was examining perhaps fifteen or twenty, unable to decide which she liked best.

I began at the ring counter. It was a privilege to work for such a famous firm as Rappington and Son, because I came into daily contact with well-known people. The " great " men and women of that day were easy to deal with. Class distinctions were marked. Rich *parvenus*, whom we called " pushers," were less arrogant than the wives of post-war profiteers. I think they were " awed " into a comical humility by us. I have remarked elsewhere that strangers were watched from the moment they passed our swing-doors, because our wares were not unconsidered. But old Rappington rubbed it in that we were sentries " on guard." No excuse would be accepted if we were caught napping.

One fine Saturday morning in June a charming young couple shyly approached my counter. Obviously Jack wanted an engagement ring for Jill. It warmed me up to look at them, because each looked so adoringly at the other. I had never seen them before.

The young lady—how easy they were to please in those days!—selected a half-hoop of diamonds priced at seventy guineas. With the hagglers—and few dared to haggle—we were authorized to shade guineas into pounds. The young man paid spot cash and slipped the ring on to her engagement finger there and then, whispering something which raised a blush. Apparently they were in no hurry. I decided that they didn't belong, either of them, to the smart set. It annoyed me that I couldn't " place " them. From their gay chatter I deduced that the wedding bells would soon be a-ringing. It was quite in order to show them certain pieces of plate that might serve as wedding presents. Their ignorance about silver plate (we have some magnificent specimens) distressed me. Again I deduced that old plate failed to interest them because they were unfamiliar with it. The young lady did not seem to be aware that silver platters and plates are in ceremonial use in our stately homes. She observed innocently:—

" I don't think I *could* eat off silver, could you, Cyril? "

Cyril replied as ingenuously:—

" I don't know, darling. I've never tried."

By this time I had placed them as belonging to the suburban upper-middle class. Try to measure my astonishment when the young lady said, as if she were asking me to pass the salt:—

" Now that we are here, we might look at some tiaras."

Tiaras!

I had never shown a tiara to any of my customers. Old Mr. Rappington had no faith in window-dressing. Our wares were inside our establishment. Tiaras, and all very valuable pieces, remained in our strong-room, and were exhibited on demand by the partners. I hesitated. Cyril laughed.

" Steady on, Maudie; the governor won't run to a tiara."

" He might."

That was good enough. One never knows one's luck. If a tiara was bought through me I might anticipate a small commission. I excused myself and went to young Mr. Rappington's room. He happened to be busy with a personage, and eyed me not too pleasantly.

" Yes, Corwen? "

" A customer wants to see some tiaras. He has just bought a seventy-guinea ring."

" Has he? I can't attend to him. There are three tiaras in those cases on my desk. You can show them to him. But if he wants to buy one, I will deal with him when I'm at liberty."

I carried the cases to my own counter. During my absence Cyril must have said

something to Maud, because she stammered out :—

" I—I oughtn't to have put you to all this trouble. We aren't buying tiaras. Mr. Redpath has been scolding me."

Redpath——

I smiled. If Cyril was, by any chance, the son of *the* Redpath, I was not wasting my time. The Redpath—a Liverpudlian—had made a huge fortune out of pills. They were called " Redpath's Perambulating Pearls." Intimacy, in a sense, was established because I had taken the perambulators. It flashed into my mind that Holmes would discover in two jiffs whether Cyril was his son or not. How would he set about it ?

I opened the cases.

" How thrilling ! " exclaimed Maud. " Oh, Cyril, I couldn't wear such a lovely thing, could I ? "

" You could—and you shall, some day," replied a gallant lover. " But, as I told you a minute ago, the old man is a pincher. Likes his joke about that, too. When he told me that he had given an engagement ring to the mater that was good value for a tenner, he added slyly : ' Of course I was not a rich man's son.' "

They chuckled over this cooingly. Inspiration came to me.

Somehow I sniffed romance.

" Would you like to see some *pearls ?* " I asked.

" Cyril ! "

" Pearls," he said, with a shade of irritation in his voice, " are too like pills."

Now, would that have been enough for Holmes ? I don't know. Young Mr. Redpath seemed to be greatly taken with tiaras, but what he knew about diamonds was negligible.

" I suppose these are Cape stones ? " he said.

" Pardon me. They are Brazilian—of exceptional quality."

" And the price of this ? "

He picked out the best.

" Ah, you must see Mr. Rappington, junior, about that, sir."

" But roughly ? "

" Between two and three thousand guineas."

" I'll make a mental note. Come on, Maud. Oh, by the way, where is the picture shop—Barnew's ? "

I said in my best manner :—

" It is almost next door. You don't know London very well ? "

" I don't. I know every inch of Liverpool."

" We shall come here again," said Maud. " Thanks ever so much. Will you—will you serve us next time ? "

" With pleasure, if you will be good enough to ask for me. My name is Corwen."

" I sha'n't forget. *Au revoir*, Mr. Corwen."

" *Au revoir*, Miss Redpath."

" My name isn't Redpath—yet. My name is Druitt. Oh, Cyril, your cigarette case ! "

" What a head you have, blessedest ! "

He took a silver cigarette case from his pocket, saying carefully :—

" Something is wrong with the hinge or snap. Will you have it adjusted and send it to me at Harland's Hotel, Pall Mall ? I am staying there for a week."

" You shall have it Monday night, sir."

III.

I WAS quite pleased with myself. I doubt whether Sherlock could have done better in the circumstances. When I took back the tiaras to young Mr. Rappington—(he was nearly forty then)—I addressed him with ease and confidence.

" Mr. Redpath, the son of Mr. Redpath of Liverpool, and his *fiancée*, Miss Maud Druitt, will call again about the tiaras, sir. They have gone on to Barnew's."

" M'm ! Are you speaking of the son of the manufacturer of pills ? "

" Yes."

" I didn't know that he had a son. If he and Miss——"

" Druitt."

" If he and Miss Druitt call again, you can turn them over to me."

Disconcerting ! Here was I toiling and spinning for others, and not a word of encouragement. But that is part of the discipline of big business. *I was playing the game*—a heartening thought.

Behind my counter my fancy dwelt upon this engaging pair. I sniffed romance. Miss Druitt wore pretty, inexpensive clothes of provincial cut ; young Mr. Redpath was smartly turned out. A rich man's son had fallen in love with a poor man's daughter. If a rich man's daughter fell in love with me ! The industrious apprentice—his employer's beautiful daughter. But old Rappington hadn't a beautiful daughter.

A customer challenged my attention.

At closing time—one on Saturday—I made an appalling discovery. I had several trays of rings in my custody. Each ring had its own snug niche ; all the diamond half-hoops were together in scintillating rows. In the early 'nineties half-hoops were still the favourite—soon, alas, to lose pride of place. During that morning I had sold five rings, but only one diamond half-hoop. Glancing over my wares before locking up my cases, I sustained the first overwhelming shock of my life. A diamond ring was missing.

The young man slipped the ring on to her engagement finger there and then, whispering something which raised a blush.

I ought, of course, to have reported a theft at once to the Rappingtons; but that might mean dismissal—ruin. I did both father and son grievous injustice, but I was barely twenty-six and on trial. At the worst they would have sent me back to the setting-room.

I locked the show-case, and within an hour was sitting on my bed in a Bloomsbury lodging-house.

What would Sherlock Holmes have done?

I had such faith in my hero that I would have laid the odds of a thousand to three

that he, particularly if Dr. Watson was out of the way, would retrieve the stolen ring in a few hours. I had the week-end.

I put on a dressing-gown and filled my pipe with shag tobacco. Thank God, my head was clear enough! I could remember every customer; what rings they had looked at; what each had said and done. Only once had I taken the tray that held the half-hoop diamonds from the show-case. It was so easy to reconstruct the crime. The man had sat down and never moved; the girl had fingered at least a dozen rings, slipping them on and off, always replacing each in its right place. I was pleased with her because she did this, and did it so daintily. Before I fetched the tiaras the ring she selected was bought and paid for; and I had replaced the tray. Whilst she was fingering the rings she must have slipped one into her pocket. The man was an accomplice. How cleverly they had played their little comedy! Had they left the shop immediately after buying the ring, my attention might have been called to the empty niche. The time wasted showing them plate and tiaras had distracted my attention. I had gone back to my counter thinking of them, not of my precious wares.

At the end of an hour I decided to tell old Mr. Rappington the first thing on Monday morning. I could describe accurately a man and a girl who had flitted in and out of our establishment, giving false names. They were at large. The police might do something. But what chance had I? None.

I LUNCHED late at a cheap restaurant and glanced at the evening paper. Under the caption "Society Notes" I read the following announcement:—

A marriage has been arranged and will shortly take place between Maud, eldest daughter of Carlos Druitt, of The Cedars, Halliford-on-Thames, and Cyril Augustus, only son of William Redpath, of Liverpool, the well-known millionaire and philanthropist.

I sat back in my chair, stunned. At such moments Holmes took, so we are given to understand, some potent drug. I could think of no drug other than the Perambulating Pearls, which, I may say, I am never without. Maud—I thought of her as Maud because of a jingling Limerick about a young woman called Maud who in the ballroom was frigid and cold, but on the backstairs, O my Gawd!—had stolen a ring worth seventy-five guineas. There was no loop-hole by which Maud could escape. Nobody but she had touched the half-hoop diamond rings. Now, in the name of unreason, why should a young woman, even if her name was Maud, steal a ring when she was about to marry the son of a millionaire? Could Holmes answer that question? Yes, by Heaven, he could! Maud, poor child, was a kleptomaniac.

I returned to my bed-sitting-room and smoked more shag tobacco. I shut the windows, crumpled up an ounce of shag, and hoped to establish the right atmosphere.

What would Holmes do? Before that ounce of tobacco was finished I know what I did. I fell upon my bed, feeling horribly sick. But, please note this, I had made up my mind what Holmes would do and swore to myself that I would do it. This was one of those delicate situations which the great man handled to perfection. I felt emboldened to tread humbly in his footsteps.

I was very sorry for myself when I woke up next morning after a much-disturbed night. Mrs. Corwen, when she tells this story, asserts that my admiration for my hero was carried to such ridiculous lengths that I doped (her word) myself with hashish. I need only say, in rebuttal, that if I had wanted to take hashish I should not have been able to procure it. However—the ladies love embellishments.

I couldn't face my egg (not new-laid), but I could and did face Mr. Cyril Redpath. I called on him at Harland's Hotel at nine-thirty on the bare chance of finding him at home; it was more than probable that he was spending the week-end at Halliford-on-Thames with his *fiancée*. If so, I intended to travel down to Halliford by the next train.

Cyril was surprised to see me, but he asked me in the pleasantest manner to sit down and fill my pipe. I refused to do this because—well, because Holmes, so far as I can remember, did *not* carry his pipe into action. I was prepared for action. My word might provoke a blow. Cyril had just finished what appeared to have been a hearty Sunday breakfast.

He was wearing a grey flannel suit and a silk shirt. His tie advertised the colours of some boating club. I deduced that from a gold safety-pin with a miniature scull as bar. Before I stated my business he glanced at the clock on the mantelpiece.

"You will have plenty of time," I said quietly, "to catch the ten-forty-five from Waterloo."

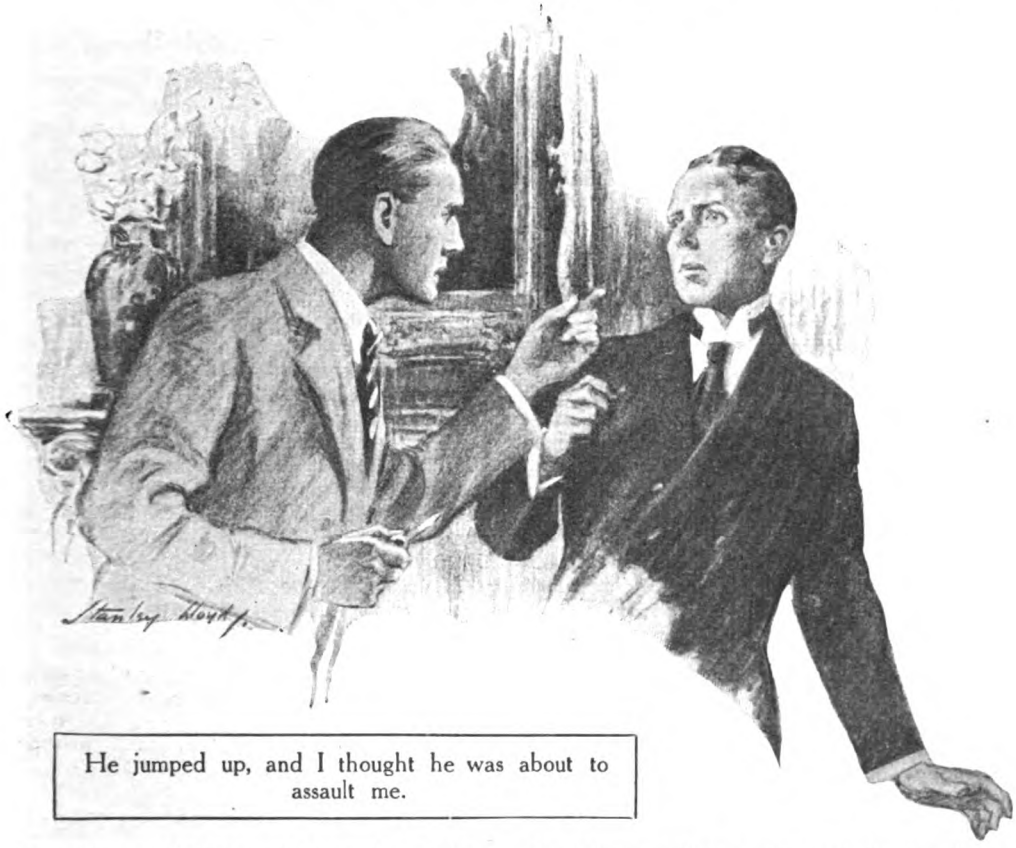
"Eh, what? How did you know that?"

The young fellow was agape.

"Aren't you going on the river with Miss Druitt?"

"I am; but how the——"

I explained briefly, and he laughed. Then I went into action. I can't recall my exact words, but you must take it from me that I did not disgrace my Gamaliel. As delicately as possible I recited the facts and



He jumped up, and I thought he was about to assault me.

drew the inevitable conclusion. I ended on D in Alt :—

" I ought to have gone to Mr. Rappington at once, but that might have precipitated a public scandal. The young lady is so sweet and so young. Sunday has intervened opportunely. You are overwhelmed with astonishment ; so am I. *But these things happen.* One of our most valued customers, a belted earl and very rich, came into our establishment not so long ago, bought an enormous ruby, and pocketed a Queen Anne spoon, which, I may tell you in confidence, was returned as usual by his valet next day."

" You accuse Miss Druitt of being a kleptomaniac ? "

" It is impossible to accuse a young lady of her appearance of being a thief."

" Are you mad, Mr. Corwen, or am I ? "

I shrugged my shoulders.

" I have tried," I said, " to do as I would be done by."

" And if I had sprung this incredible accusation on you, wouldn't you have attempted to—to punch my head ? "

" I assumed, very reluctantly, that risk, Mr. Redpath."

He jumped up, and I thought he was about to assault me. Instead, he paced up and down the room, assimilating, no doubt, my flawless *facts*. Presently he stood still, staring at me.

" Has it occurred to you, Mr. Corwen, that *you* might have taken this missing ring ? "

It hadn't. That's where I slipped up, being a mere amateur. I deduce from his next words that my face gave me away. I mean that innocence must have been inscribed upon it in red ink.

" *You* didn't steal the ring," he said, less harshly, " but who did ? "

I remained silent. It was comforting to reflect that I was not dealing with a hot-headed fool. He said abruptly :—

" Will you come to Halliford with me ? I do appreciate one thing. You might have sent for the nearest policeman. *That* might have pleased my father—a public scandal would be an ' ad ' for his pills—but it would wreck my engagement."

I deduced, of course, that his father had opposed the engagement. He went on hurriedly :—

" If you meet Miss Druitt and say exactly what you have said to me she will convince

you of her innocence as you have convinced me of yours. If "—he paused and flushed deeply—" if she took that ring, which I refuse to admit, she will be terrified into owning up."

" In that case I should replace the ring on Monday morning as soon as I opened my show-case, and the incident would be closed. I will accompany you to Halliford-on-Thames."

IV.

IT is said that Napoleon would have won the Battle of Waterloo had his " Little Mary " been in working order. Credit, I think, is due to me for the plan of campaign which I evolved when physically I was at a low ebb. Some of Holmes's greatest *coups* were carried to a successful issue when he, gallant fellow, must have been feeling like nothing on earth. I suggested, before we had passed Wimbledon, that I would lunch by myself and stroll half a mile up the tow-path. Cyril and Maud would pick me up, and then we would seek and find some friendly willows to which a punt could be tied. Cyril approved this plan. Maud's mother might see them off at the boathouse where the punt had been engaged. We should ensure privacy.

Everything worked according to plan. I made a better luncheon than I had anticipated, and felt fortified thereby. Being a very young man it annoyed me, I remember, that I was wearing a frock-coat and a tall hat. A couple of river-loafers made some ribald remarks, asking me why I hadn't blacked my face and brought a banjo.

When the punt came along, Maud was wielding the pole with grace and vigour. Cyril espied and hailed me. Maud seemed astounded when he invited me to join them. I deduced that he had not prepared the poor child for what was coming. No doubt he wanted me to spring my indictment on her as unexpectedly as he had sprung his on me.

Well, I did it in a clump of scented bulrushes.

" You are surprised to see me, Miss Druitt ? " I said.

" Why, yes, I am. But did I show it ? Forgive me. You were so nice yesterday ; and we are coming again, aren't we, Cyril ? "

" I hope so."

" How oddly you say that ! I'm not thinking of the tiaras. I want to give you a present—studs, links—something you will always wear."

Jolly, wasn't it, to bludgeon such a little dear ?

" You are wearing your ring, Miss Druitt ? "

She replied solemnly :—

" I hope to wear it all my life, Mr. Corwen."

" What have you done with the other ? "

" What other ? "

" The one you slipped into your pocket when I wasn't looking."

She burst out laughing, beaming at me.

" What fun ! It's a new game, isn't it ? You *must* teach me. What ought I to reply ? I hate not playing up."

What would Holmes have done ?

What would he have said ?

Cyril began to laugh. He answered for me :—

" How quick you are, Maudie ! This *is* the new ' dialogue ' game. If you are asked an unexpected question, you have, as you say, to play up."

" Of course. How silly I am ! Let me see." She pursed up her pretty lips. " Oh, yes. I thought I might be caught and searched, so I swallowed it."

" Well played ! " exclaimed Cyril. He turned to me : " She swallowed it. You're next, Corwen."

He dropped the " Mr." I thought of dropping into the river. Instead I stammered out :—

" Have you d-d-digested it ? "

" I hope to do so, with the aid of one of Redpath's Perambulating Pearls. Set a pearl to catch a diamond."

" Not bad." He turned to me again with a reassuring smile : " What would you do if you swallowed a mare's nest ? "

Call me anything you like, but I played the game to the last.

" If I swallowed a mare's nest, by mistake, I should beg the mare's pardon."

" Well played," said Cyril.

V.

ANTI-CLIMAX ! But climax is to come —not yet. I knew that I had perpetrated an abominable blunder. Maudie had established her innocence. I don't dare to affirm that Holmes would have accepted that on the spot, as I did. But I think he would. When Mrs. Corwen reads these lines, which she asked me to print, she may be confounded to learn that I fell in love with Maudie there and then, and would have married her joyously had she asked me to do so. There was a tea basket in the punt—tea for two. Maudie made tea for three. After tea I took leave of them, very regretfully.

Returning alone to London, the Master failed me. If you come to think of it, that's the weak spot in his biography. Dr. Boswell —I mean Dr. Watson—has portrayed the Great Man as making everybody appear a damned fool except himself. I felt a damned fool.

I had to face Monday morning and old

When the punt came along, Maud was wielding the pole with grace and vigour.

Rappington. A ring was missing. A sentry had been caught napping. Out of my hard-earned savings I should have to deduct—as a fitting penalty for false deductions—some seventy-five pounds. Wait! I dare say Dr. Watson, when he was killing off his own patients, had some bright moments. Old Rappington would debit me with the cost price of the missing ring. I might be permitted to go back to the setting-room and make it myself, paying for the stones, the platinum, and the gold.

Yes, he would allow me to do that.

At ten, punctually (we opened at nine), old Mr. Rappington passed through the swing-doors and went to his room. I locked my show-case and followed him. He received me genially, saying in his bantering way :—

"You want to go back to the setting-room ?"

"No, sir. A diamond ring, priced at seventy-five guineas, is missing out of one of my trays."

"Sit down," he replied, curtly, "and tell me all about it. When did you miss it ? This morning ?"

I was tempted to lie for Maudie's sake. The ring had vanished. I had a vision of a Liverpudlian refusing at the last moment to sanction an engagement.

"I missed it, sir, when I was looking over my stock just before closing time on Saturday."

"Why didn't you come to me at once ?"

"You weren't here, sir."

"True. You should have gone to my son. You know that. Why didn't you ?"

"I—I behaved like a fool, sir. I thought that I might retrieve and replace the ring."

"What an optimist! Now, Alfred, I have known you and watched you ever since you entered my service. I would as soon suspect *you* of stealing a ring as I would my own son."

This was very handsome of him, more than I expected or deserved.

"Don't blink at me," he continued. "The ring has been stolen by someone who may have seen that you were a novice. That has happened before and will happen again. Tell me frankly why you thought you could retrieve this missing ring ?"

"I have said that I was a fool, sir."

"You are not a fool. You wouldn't be in my service if you were. You suspected some customer. Out with it."

"Ye-es, sir."

"And had the conceit to think that you could deal with him or her. You look a most abandoned person this morning."

"I have not slept well for two nights, sir."

"If you want to sleep soundly to-night you had better make a clean breast of this."

I had to tell him—everything. Not as I have tried to tell it here, but shockingly. He was very patient with me, but when I came to the end, to the "dialogue" game, he lay back in his chair and roared with laughter.

"And you think this girl is innocent because she is pretty and quick-witted ? How young you are, Alf."

I felt about six years old.

He opened a drawer and took from it a ring.

"Is this the missing ring, my boy ?"

I leaned forward, nearly falling out of my chair.

"Yes, sir," I gasped.

"I took it, Alf. I wanted to test you. I ran a certain risk in pulling you out of the setting-room and pitchforking you into your present department. My son was against my doing it. Perhaps he was right. He pointed out your lack of experience. He argued that for many years you had trained yourself to concentrate upon some particular bit of work right under your nose, a grave disability when concentration has to be scattered. A man in charge of one of our counters needs a thousand eyes. Obviously you are not an observer."

I winced.

"I removed that ring after you had left on Friday evening. When do you count your rings ?"

"Just before closing time each day. In the morning I—I take for granted that the stock is as I left it."

He chuckled.

"You won't do that again ?"

"No, sir."

"Replace the ring. You have had two sleepless nights—punishment enough. Had you reported the loss of the ring on Saturday at nine or at one, my son would have told you, perhaps, that he had lost a sovereign to me. Now I lose a sovereign to him, but I have had a good laugh for my money. Go back to your department."

I HAD played up and played a losing game, but, all said and done, I was not, financially speaking, a loser. The Redpaths became our customers. Eventually I sold to them a superb tiara. What is of far more importance, I became their friend.

I am godfather to their youngest daughter, whose name is—Maud.

(*Next month : "The Diamond Parure."*)

HELPING SOCIETY CLIMBERS—AND OTHERS

Some Confessions of a Press-Agent

Illustrated by
E. P. KINSELLA

EDITORIAL press publicity, as we understand it to-day, was introduced into this country by the famous showmen, Barnum and Bailey. At that time I was a very young reporter on a London daily paper, and I remember the heated discussions between the advertisement manager and the news editor when Barnum and Bailey's indirect advertisements began to creep into our journal under the guise of news. The advertisement manager vigorously opposed the innovation. The news editor argued with equal vigour that to scrap such interesting " stories " would be sinful.

The news editor won.

Since then editorial press publicity has gone to all sorts of lengths, until at last these " stories " have come to constitute some of the most interesting reading matter in most of the London and important provincial morning and evening papers. Articles signed by actors and actresses, film stars, concert artists, and others with axes to grind are read with avidity, probably only a small section of the general public being aware that many of these screeds are veiled advertisements written for the most part not by the " writers " themselves, but by their energetic press-agents.

My own first attempt at publicity work of this kind was when the late Imre Kiralfy engaged me and one other to " boost " his second Exhibition at the White City at Shepherd's Bush. The Exhibition had been going badly, he told us, so he was going to try what could be done by " boosting " it on Barnum and Bailey lines.

" And if you don't make good in the first month," he said, " you'll both be fired. You've got to *stir things up.*"

Well, we did stir things up! We began by interviewing the manager of every section of the Exhibition separately, telling him that if any " stories " of any happenings or alleged happenings of interest in his section were reported to us we would get such " stories " published in the newspapers, which would, of course, help to draw attention to his particular attraction. We interviewed the manager of the Great Mountain Railway, of the Witching Waves, of the Wiggle-Woggle, of the Switchback Track, of the Greatest Menagerie in the World, of the Native Village, of the Scottish Village and the Irish Village, of the Big Wheel, of all the smaller side-shows, and so on.

AND at once " stories," some of them strangely fantastic, began to come along. One of the first, I remember, was to the effect that the Menagerie's orang-outang had given birth to a baby orang-outang. When all the evening papers had safely sent their final editions to press, we suddenly sprang this " story " on all the morning papers and all the news agencies. Next morning nearly all the papers had the " story," and, as we had anticipated, before ten o'clock we were besieged by evening paper reporters and photographers clamouring for details about the birth, and the baby's health, and the mother's condition, and for photographs of mother and child.

They were told that most unfortunately the infant orang had not survived. Probably the bad weather we had been enjoying had proved fatal to it. Well, then, could they see the body and photograph that? But by a deplorable mischance (they were informed) the body had already been cremated and its ashes scattered. Not to be beaten—you can never beat a good reporter,

to whom a good "story" is like red meat to a tiger—they insisted on visiting the mother and photographing her, and that evening the newspapers contained pathetic descriptions of the heart-broken orang bemoaning the loss of her first-born (which, of course, had never existed).

Another of our stunts at the White City was in connection with the importation of girls from the Highlands to inhabit the Scottish Village. They were to be accompanied by six Highland pipers in the national costume, and we had arranged that they should be driven from Euston to Shepherd's Bush by a circuitous route through the main streets of London in horse-drawn brakes, the pipers sitting beside the drivers and piping all the way, to draw attention to this White City attraction.

They insisted on photographing the broken-hearted orang bemoaning the loss of her first-born.

They were due to arrive at Euston early in the afternoon, and at eleven in the morning Kiralfy received a telegram saying that the pipers had gone on strike, so that only the girls would arrive.

Kiralfy metaphorically pawed the air. No pipers! Of what use to drive a lot of girls through the streets of London without any noise to attract attention to them and advertise the White City?

Suddenly I had an inspiration. I rang up a big stores.

"I wonder," I said, "if it would be possible for you to find six Scottish pipers . . ." and I went on to explain why they were wanted.

"Certainly," came the brisk reply. "How many do you want?"

"But I want them to-day, by three o'clock," I said, anxiously.

"That's all right. They'll be at Euston at three."

Wonderful! I might have been ordering tea-cups or lamp-shades! You would have thought that Scottish pipers in costume were ordered from that stores every day by the gross.

They were already on Euston platform when I got there, piping away gaily. Magnificent fellows, complete with kilts and sporrans and hairy legs.

"What part of the Highlands do you come from?" I asked, looking up at one of them about six feet four in height.

He laughed.

"Highlands?" he said. "I was born in Clapham. I've never been nearer Scotland than Cromer."

Shocked, I turned to another. This fine creature must surely be a Highlander *de pur sang*. He seemed to exhale the very atmosphere, mountain glens and heather.

"You are a Scotsman, anyway," I said.

"Guess not," he answered. "Guess I come from Ohio."

And thus with stunt after stunt and "story" after "story" we worked up the publicity of the White City Exhibition until, as many will remember, it became the talk of London.

The idea of helping social climbers came to me later, and in rather a curious way. After "boosting" various other exhibitions, also theatres and private individuals, I had opened an office for publicity in the West-end, when one morning a prosperous-looking middle-aged woman was shown in.

"Are we quite alone here?" she asked. "Nobody can hear us talking? That is all right. I have been told that you arrange newspaper publicity for actresses and persons of that class. Now, I am wondering if you can do something of the sort for me—but mind, nobody must know a word about it."

I assured her that my business was conducted in the most confidential manner imaginable.

"That is good. Now I have here"—she opened her bag and produced a scrap of paper with some writing on it—"a few lines that I particularly want to appear in . . ." she named an important journal, "and to get it in I am prepared to pay twenty pounds. Just read it, will you?"

The paragraph ran somewhat as follows:—

"*Among others present at Lady ——'s reception I particularly noticed handsome Mrs.* —— (naming herself), *who looked quite charming in* (here followed a description of what she had worn), *and deep in conversation with the Earl of* ——."

I told her I thought it could be managed,

but suggested that another journal, which I named, had a larger circulation, so that perhaps . . .

" No," she interrupted, " I want it to go into the paper I said. I think I will be quite frank with you, young man. I want it to go into that paper because a friend of mine who always reads the social notes in it thinks she is everybody and is always hinting that *I* don't know anybody who matters. I want to show her that *I* go into Society *too*."

It was that incident which set me thinking. If there was one woman ready to pay twenty pounds to get a little paragraph like that about herself inserted in a newspaper, surely there must be many more who would be prepared to do the same if they knew how to set about it—if only one could find them. Then and there I decided to find them and to exploit their very human frailty.

The manager of a social bureau, whom I approached on the subject, told me at once that there were plenty of people only too anxious to get social publicity, and so it was arranged that she should send on to me persons who she had reason to believe might prove to be potential clients.

They soon began to arrive. They included rich Americans and South Americans and a goodly number of English folk who had amassed large fortunes—more often than not these potential clients were women. And almost always the first stipulation they made when we got down to brass tacks was that nobody must ever suspect what they were doing; what they would have to pay for their publicity seemed not to trouble them at all.

Most of them put forward some apparently excellent reason for requiring publicity. Mrs. A. had a daughter whom she wanted to be presented, only unfortunately (" I don't mind telling *you*, of course, you not being in Society") she " didn't know a blessed soul in Reel 'Igh Society," and she thought that if her name could be " pushed into the papers by 'ook or crook " and her movements chronicled, " my 'usband being a very wealthy man," she might eventually get to know " some of the swells."

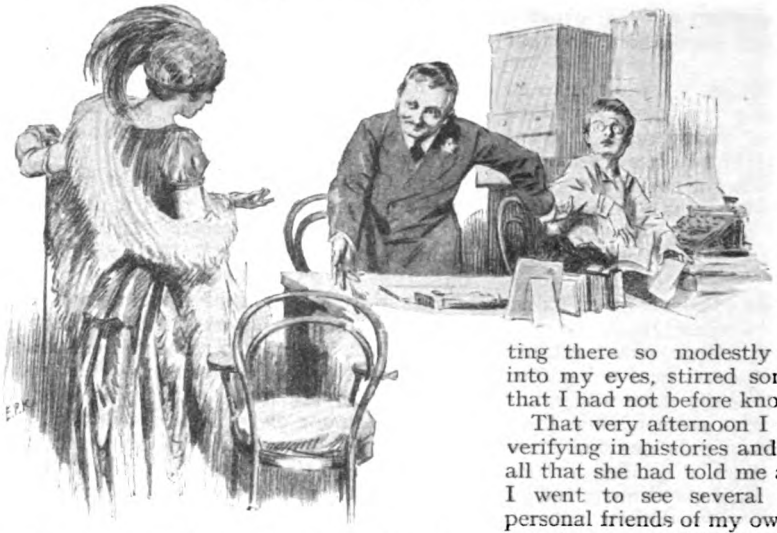
Mrs. B., the wife of an overseas self-made millionaire, wanted to get the papers to talk about her and to bracket her name with the names of people with titles because she had three daughters whom she was most anxious to " marry into the British nobility," a very laudable ambition.

Mrs. C. thought her name ought to appear in the papers more often than it did, solely in her husband's interest, " him being a member of Parliament." And so it went on.

One day a Vision of Loveliness floated into my office; she was not the first nor yet the last Vision who came to me for help and advice. She came across the room rather timidly, then said almost in a whisper: " May I see you *quite* privately, please ? "

My typist happened to be with me, so I told her to go right out of the office and not come back for half an hour. Then in my best professional manner I pushed forward a chair and asked the Beautiful Creature in what way I could be of service to her.

" What part of the Highlands do you come from ? " I asked. " Highlands ? " he said. " I was born in Clapham. I've never been nearer Scotland than Cromer."



One day a Vision of Loveliness floated into my office. She came across the room rather timidly, then said almost in a whisper: "May I see you *quite* privately, please?"

She cleared her throat, got rather red, and then—

"I heard about you yesterday quite by accident," she said, "and about what you do, putting photographs and things about people in the papers and all that sort of thing, you know, and so—and so——"

"Yes?" I said, gently. She certainly was exquisite to look upon, not more than twenty at most, with breeding showing in her features, her ankles, and every one of her finger-nails.

"Well, it's like this," she went on, suddenly bracing herself. "I belong to a very old family, but we are dreadfully poor, and I have got engaged to be married to a very rich man with a title, and—and his people are furious about it, won't even let me be introduced to them."

She then told me all about her family and her forbears, and about all sorts of deeds of prowess that had made her ancestors glorious in the pages of history, why her family had become so poor, and so on and so forth.

"So you see I am not the little nobody or the upstart that my future husband's people think I am," she ended rather pathetically, "and so what I want you to do for me if you can is to get into the papers some of my photographs with something under them about who I really am and what my grandfather and grandmother were and all the wonderful things my ancestors did, because I want his people to see for themselves that I am not what they think I am. Would that be very, very expensive? I can only afford to pay a very little."

I was young in those days, and susceptible, and somehow this charming girl, sitting there so modestly and staring right into my eyes, stirred something within me that I had not before known existed.

That very afternoon I set to work. After verifying in histories and books of reference all that she had told me about her forbears, I went to see several editors who were personal friends of my own, and got them to promise to publish the paragraphs I had brought with me and to use the photographs—my client had handed me a dozen dream portraits of herself before leaving. And for several days I attended chiefly to her, side-tracking other clients to make extra time to attend to her publicity.

Soon she came in again, beaming.

"You are doing marvellously!" she exclaimed. "Would you believe it, my future husband's relatives have begun to thaw already. Two of his aunts have actually invited me to lunch! Do go on. Do keep it up. I'll send you an invitation to the wedding, and oh—you *must* come!"

The wedding was a big affair, and I noticed with satisfaction (and, dare I add, some pride?) that at the reception the bridegroom's kinsfolk were "all over" the bride. She introduced me to her husband as "a very old friend" (I had known her just six weeks), and eventually the husband and I became very intimate. To this day he does not suspect the ruse his wife had recourse to in regard to his relations—though he has since divorced her.

In the "boosting" of Society climbers the greatest care has to be exercised, for the slightest *faux pas* may bring a hornet's nest about your ears, and to make a *faux pas* is the easiest thing in the world. Society climbers, actors and actresses, variety artists, painters and sculptors, novelists, musicians, members of Parliament and their wives and daughters, each group needs a different sort of handling. Not many years ago the same "story" or paragraph about a single individual could be sent to a dozen or more different papers, and perhaps half of them would publish it. To-day the papers all clamour for exclusive "stories" and paragraphs, sometimes even exclusive photo-

graphs too. That makes the publicity organizer's task much greater, and probably is responsible for the utterly fantastic and therefore quite obviously fictitious statements which we sometimes read about well-known people, about actresses and film stars in particular. And my own opinion is that the public is wearying of such tales, that it now believes few of them, and therefore that eventually editorial publicity badly done will end by killing editorial publicity altogether.

Also many of the stunts are so hackneyed and so threadbare. When you read that "that charming actress, Miss Twenty Toes," has had her jewellery stolen or her flat broken into; or that a pin in the back of her bodice caused such exquisite pain that she fell fainting in her manager's arms the moment she came off the stage; or that somewhere in the Outer Hebrides she met with a frightful motor accident (of which she shows not a trace when you meet her in Bond Street a week later); or that she has been chased half-way across some Continent by an infatuated sheikh; or has rushed across the Atlantic to sit at the bedside of a sick friend; or that while crossing the Pacific to fulfil a ten-thousand-dollars-a-week engagement in Honolulu she had a scrap with an octopus whilst bathing (she dived off the deck of the liner, of course); I say when you read these and fifty stories of the same sort, do you, does the general public, believe a single one of them? About that I have my own opinion.

Some people seek publicity who could not by any possibility be of interest to anybody, because in the whole of their lives they have never done anything worth recording. It is always well to tell such people at once that nothing can be done for them, because if you undertake to "boost" them and nothing appears in the papers they naturally look on you as an impostor or something worse, and tell all their friends. I know one or two publicity organizers who are now never approached, owing solely to their having undertaken to achieve what to them must from the first have been manifestly impossible. For no editor is going to publish "stories" about an absolute nonentity.

On the other hand, people who at first appear to be hopeless sometimes reveal in course of conversation considerable possibilities. A famous French actress came to me in the days when she was quite unknown and asked if I could help her to become known. She was giving some little French plays in an obscure hall in London, and though she was extremely pretty I found her the dullest thing on earth—she had done nothing and had nothing in the least interesting to say about herself or anything else. As we went on talking, however, she happened to mention that two Popes of Rome had been among her forbears.

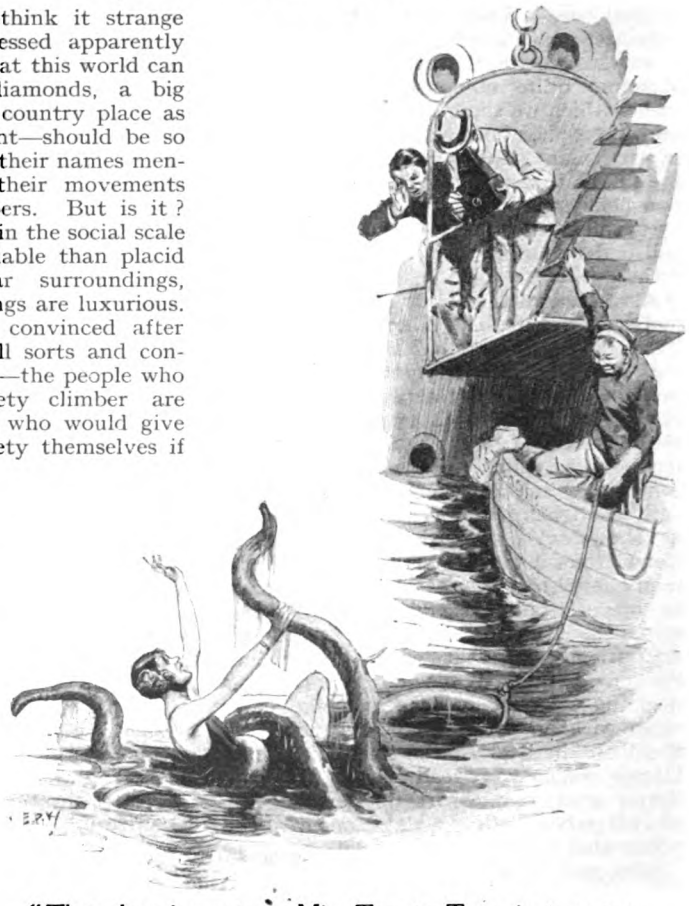
That story went out to the press after I had verified its accuracy, and nearly all the papers printed it. One provincial paper went so far as to give it the startling headline: "Actress descended from two French Popes." Popes (even French Popes!) don't marry; yet on the strength of that announcement she was interviewed, photographed, even offered more than one professional engagement. Indeed, most of the general public are far more interested in trivialities than in the serious things in life. They will skip the report of a speech by the Premier or an article on the Political Institutions of the Ancient Greeks, but read with deep interest a descriptive account of how a beautiful actress has been bitten by her pet monkey.

I noticed with satisfaction that at the reception the bridegroom's kinsfolk were "all over" the bride.

Helping Society Climbers—and Others

There are people who think it strange that men and women blessed apparently with all the good things that this world can give them—cars, furs, diamonds, a big town house, and maybe a country place as well, possibly even a yacht—should be so desperately anxious to see their names mentioned and, if possible, their movements chronicled in the newspapers. But is it? After all, the desire to rise in the social scale is at least more commendable than placid contentment with vulgar surroundings, even when such surroundings are luxurious. And of one thing I am convinced after mixing all my life with all sorts and conditions of men and women—the people who sneer most at the Society climber are generally the very people who would give anything to get into Society themselves if they had anything to give.

Our old nobility and aristocracy, or what is left of it since the war, of course detests anything in the nature of newspaper publicity. Even to get leave to interview any of them on questions of national importance is often difficult if they know that what they say will be reported in the press. But then they have no need of publicity or any need to want to climb, because their position in Society is already assured.



"That charming actress, Miss Twenty Toes, had a scrap with an octopus whilst bathing."

Finally, the work of a publicity organizer who specializes in helping Society climbers is not by any means easy. First it is essential that he should have a very big circle of acquaintances and friends amongst editors, sub-editors, art editors, reporters, and the ever-growing army of free-lance writers, many of whom to-day are women. Then he must use tact and discretion and he must *never* commit the crime of saying anything that might vex one of his clients or annoy one of his editors. If he tells a newspaper that what he sends it is exclusive news or that a photograph is exclusive, he must take the greatest care that no other journal gets that article or paragraph or photograph before the editor to whom he sent it has used it or returned it. To attempt to "puff" in an editorial column any saleable commodity which does not advertise in the journal is an even greater crime, one which has cost many an over-keen publicity organizer dear. Again, he must be familiar with such monumental works as the Peerage and Landed Gentry and acquainted with the niceties of social precedence and etiquette, or sooner or later he will make some terrible mistake that may lead to all his screeds being for ever afterwards rejected.

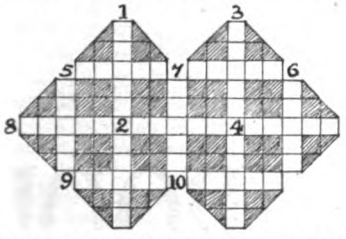
Many years ago a friend of my own made a slip from the effects of which he has to this day hardly recovered. He described a certain lady of great distinction as having been seen walking in Piccadilly at three a.m., when he had meant to write three p.m. The lady, being extremely *comme il faut*, threatened the paper with an action for libel, and was pacified only with considerable difficulty.

PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

880.—CURIOUS CROSS-WORDS.

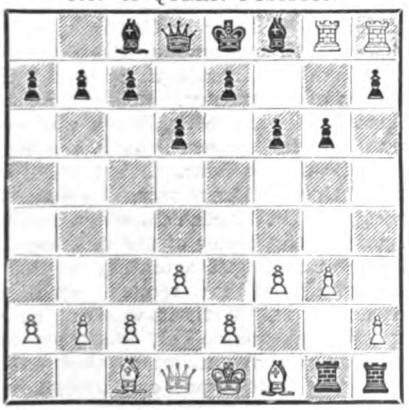
EVEN the reader who is sated with the ordinary cross-word puzzle may welcome this original variation sent to me by P. J. R. W., from Geneva. All the words



are five-letter words and end in the same two-lettered suffix. Of course (4 d) means 4 down and (7 a) stands for 7 across.

The hardened (4 d) . . . . screwed a monocle into his left (5 d) . . . . . and digging viciously into his quail in (3 d) . . . . . launched into his favourite (7 a) . . . . . "The (1 d) . . . . . principles," he began, "of (7 d) . . . . . Opera are to (2 a) . . . . . one's betters; evoke hideous noises and call them (5 a) . . . . . ; and indulge in every species of grotesque (8 a) . . . . . suggestive rather of (9 a) . . . . . than of rhythm, and dub it dancing! In fact," he concluded, "the Stage of to-day is a (2 d) . . . . . of barbarism." This ebullition acted like a (10 a) . . . . . on most of the histrionic company present, exciting some to the verge of (4 a) . . . . . ; while the suppressed mirth of a young footman caused him to burst his (6 d) . . . . .

881.—A QUEER POSITION.



AT first glance the reader might suppose that the above position is one that could not possibly arise in a game of chess. But he would be wrong. Can you construct a possible game, however absurd, in the fewest possible moves, that would bring about the position? It will be found an amusing little exercise.

882.—A RETURN JOURNEY.

A MESSENGER was sent on a certain errand. He went at the rate of five miles per hour and he came back at the rate of three miles per hour, making the double journey in just seven hours. It is an interesting little puzzle to discover, from these facts, exactly how far he had to go.

883.—DROP LETTER PUZZLE.

THE following is a quotation from Coleridge in which every vowel has been dropped and they are all represented by dots. Can you restore the quotation? The spaces between words are not indicated.

T.b.wr.thw.th.n.w.l.v.d.thw.rkl.k.m.dn.ss.nth .br..n

884.—THE STOPPED CLOCK.

A VERY accurate clock with three hands was stopped when the hour and minute hands were exactly together, but all that can be remembered is that the seconds hand indicated eleven seconds all but a very small fraction. What was the time at which the clock was stopped?

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

876.—CONDITIONAL MAGIC SQUARE.

18	22	1	10	14
24	3	7	11	20
5	9	13	17	21
6	15	19	23	2
12	16	25	4	8

THE example here shown is a solution, with the odd and even numbers placed in the positions desired.

877.—THE CONSPIRATORS' CODE.

THE answer is as follows:—

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    5 9 8
    5 o 7
8 o 4 7
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9 1 5 2
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I regret that space will not allow me to show the interesting line of reasoning by which the figures may be determined.

878.—BOXES OF CORDITE.

THE dump officer should give boxes of 18 until the remainder is a multiple of 5. Then, unless this is 5, 10, or 25, he gives this remainder in 15's and 20's. The biggest number for which this system breaks down is 72 plus 25, or 97. Of course in the case of higher numbers, such as 133, where 108, in six boxes of 18, leaves 25, he would give only one box of 18, leaving 115, which he would deliver in one box of 15 and five boxes of 20. But in the case of 97, 72 is the first and only case leaving a multiple of 5, that is 25.

879.—TWO MORE QUEER WORDS.

THE two words are CASUAL and CAUSAL.

THE MAN WHO HAD LIVED

By

H. de VERE STACPOOLE

Illustrated by
W. R. S. STOTT

I.

TRAVEL teaches you a lot of things besides geography. On the move you meet people whom you would never meet at rest at home in safe and comfortable England. You get hold of strange facts, strange histories and relationships; strange stories, too.

Only last night, on board this boat, a Holland Oast Azie liner four days out from Colombo, a Chinese girl smoking a cigarette between dances in the smoke-room told me that in the Great Wall of China a live Chinaman had been entombed by the builders every few hundred yards, either as a sentry to keep out evil spirits or as an offering to the gods.

The Great Wall of China is a very long wall, and its length and the facts of its structure recalled to me somehow a story about the life of a man which I heard on my last trip East, and which I promised the Chinese girl to write out for her—as I am now doing.

Mynheer Schillings, the teller, was well known to me by name before I met him on the *Amsterdam;* he is a cigar merchant with offices in Bucklersbury, and the Java cigars he sells cannot be beaten even by the firms in Holland who are known as the "old importers."

I had seen him last in the Piccadilly Hotel, and to my surprise, on coming into the smoke-room of the *Amsterdam* just as she was clearing the Needles, there he was with a cup of coffee before him and a cigar between his fingers.

There is one thing I must tell you about the Dutch, if you don't know it: they love the past and take pride in their heroes and great men. You will say, so do the English. Maybe, but at all events the Dutch make more exhibition of the fact. You can see it even in the decoration of their ships.

In the smoke-room of the *Amsterdam*, where Mynheer Schillings was seated, you could not turn your head without catching with your eye some name or date related to the greatness of Holland: Grotius or Cornelius de Witt or P. C. Hooft, all done in that excellent carving which comes so easily from the hands that of old made treasures of marquetry.

Opposite to where Schillings was seated stood a plaque representing a sea fight—the Battle of Chatham. The English ships were fighting the Dutch ships in a fury of oak carving, and the English ships were evidently not getting the better of the business.

I drew Schillings's attention to the fact laughingly, and he replied with some complacency: "Well, it was not so very long ago—a couple of lifetimes would bring you within earshot of that battle—two men of ninety put end to end would stretch a good way into the past, so that one could say that at ten years of age he had heard from the other of events that had happened when the other was ten—that is one hundred and sixty years before. And why ninety? There are men much above ninety. We know from Scripture that there have been men of ten times ninety. I will just tell you something. I believe that the human race, at least the Western peoples, have condemned themselves

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to short life by following a fixed idea—let us call it the seventy idea. No man feels he has any right to live after seventy; isn't that so? But how absurd! Every day you read of men of a hundred, of a hundred and ten even. These men are called exceptions, they are looked on as freaks. Why? They are plain demonstrations of the fact that a man can live a hundred years and over, and instead of being taken as a standard of growth they are disregarded or called freaks. The child, the young man, is taught that if he lives above seventy he will be out of the common; a subconscious check is set up; he adapts himself to the size of the frame made for him, and there you are.

"But there is more than that. It is within my own knowledge that men and women of the 'eighties were elderly people at forty, old at fifty. A woman of fifty at that period was a definitely old woman; her dress, everything, was designed to make her so. She died young. They would have called it old. The men were just the same. It was the convention to be old at forty, just as it was the convention to grow whiskers."

Mynheer Schillings made an impatient movement.

"The thing hit me first in a curious way. By an extraordinary chance I was made to see what life was capable of in the way of duration. I came across a man who showed me a human sequoia. Yes. That is the only name for what Mommsen showed me. Mommsen was the carpet dealer who used to supply the Courts of Europe before the Great War with extra special carpets and prayer rugs. A wizened little man, he travelled everywhere in search of his wares, from the Street of the Trumpets and Drums at Cabul to the Flea Market of Algiers. He swept the East, was known to all and known as a friend. This extraordinary man had never quarrelled, I believe, with anyone in his life. There are men like that, rarely met with, but still existent. Mommsen was one.

II.

"I MET him in Marseilles at the Hôtel Noailles. I was there on business and he was there on his departure for Algiers in the *General Chanzy*. We fell into talk in the smoke-room, and he did most of the talking, for I am a good listener when there is anything worth listening to.

"I know nothing about carpets or rugs. I did not know that in hunting these things a man sometimes runs all the risks run by your hunter of hyenas and tigers, risk of disease; of death by violence, thirst, and the chances of the desert, to say nothing of robbers. I did not know that a rose-coloured prayer rug that you could put in a handbag might be worth five thousand pounds. Mommsen's talk explained all this, and from carpets to men and women the transition was easy.

"The mention of an Arab of Jaffa who had been a witness of the Battle of the Pyramids brought up the question of age.

"'But that's absurd,' I said.

"'What?' asked Mommsen.

"'He couldn't. Think of the age he'd have been.'

"'Yes, a good age, long over a hundred; but that's nothing.'

"'Oh, nothing!'

"'I am talking of the East. A hundred is nothing in the East. Don't mistake me; amongst the generality of people in the East life is perhaps no longer than in the West, but when a man does go in for building up an age record out there, he does the business in a thorough manner. You find men who have lived so long that they seem to have lost the art of dying; here and there soaring up from the crowd you find a life that seems to give the lie to all biological teaching.

"'I have a theory that these people are the left-overs of a vanished race or type remarkable for longevity and of whom we find records not only in the Scriptures. Methuselah was not a myth.

"'From what I have seen of this business I have evolved another theory. I have noticed that these greatly aged but still vital individuals eat little—scarcely at all. I once asked one of these antiques I met in Basra, jokingly, what kept him alive, and he answered, the sun. He explained that he had eaten as other folks do till he was over fifty, and that then he had "rested his stomach," depending on the sun.

"'Well, there you are. You know what Fabre says about the young spiders. For nine months they live without food, yet are full of energy. Fabre says that this energy can only come from sunlight.

"'Now there is this thing about food. It is at once life and death; the waste products of digestion are a slow poison, but sunlight is pure vitality. We must imagine these age-giants as men adapted in some way—just as a coal burner is adapted to be an oil burner—to use sunlight in part place of food. No doubt they ate and drank, but in such a restricted manner that the food poisons could be easily eliminated. That is just a theory of mine. I mention it to account for——'

"He stopped short.

"'Yes?' I said.

"'Oh, it's no use,' replied he; 'it's only about that man I had in my mind a moment ago, but he wouldn't interest you.'

" ' Why ? '

" ' You wouldn't believe in him, and without belief there is no interest.'

" ' I have a big capacity for belief. Try me.'

" ' An Eastern man ? "

" ' Yes.'

" ' Very old ? '

" ' Yes.'

" ' So old that, in fact, he is one of the wonders of the world ? '

" I can't tell you why, but when Mommsen said this a thrill went through me. It was perhaps his voice and manner, as of one who speaks in the shadow of a temple—I don't know. I only know that I was moved, stirred by a curiosity of a brand I had never experienced before.

" We were silent for a moment, then I said :—

" ' Well, without asking me to believe, you have stirred my interest, anyhow. Where does this wonderful man live ? You say he is still alive ? '

" ' Yes. He lives in the south, away there beyond the great military road that runs from Sidi to the desert. I say he is still alive ; I ought more truly to say I believe so. It is some time since I saw him last, but he is there, I feel sure. Anyhow, I will see when I go, for I am due down there next week to see El Habib.

" ' Who is El Habib ? '

" ' He is a nomad, a man of the desert. He is not a dealer, but the deal I hope to make with him is about a rug.'

" ' Sidi is the headquarters of the Legion.'

" ' Yes. Have you never been there ? '

" ' Never.'

" ' Ah, well, you should go.'

" So we talked, and it came about that, my business allowing me a little holiday, I arranged to accompany Mommsen to Algiers.

III.

" THE run from Marseilles to Algiers is not bad if the weather is fine, which it was on our crossing.

" We put up at the Hôtel Continental for a day whilst Mommsen attended to some business, and from Algiers we went on to Oran. Algiers is like Nice up-ended on the Yorkshire moors under a southern sun ; Oran is quite different. There is the same desolate treeless country, but the place has some quality of its own which exhibits the East in its truth and nakedness. It is also the port of embarkation of the Legion.

" From here we took train to Sidi. Sidi Bel Abbes is a big place, slashed across like a hot cross bun by two great streets that intersect, and filled with a cosmopolitan crowd in which the Jew element preponderates, it seems to me, at least amongst the lower strata.

" Here stands the barracks of the Foreign Legion opposite to the Spahis' cavalry barracks and close to the Negro city, and from here, when trouble blows up down south or to the west, is launched like a thunderbolt the Legion. A regiment that can march fifty miles a day and shoot straighter than any other regiment in the service of France.

" The place interested me. I was glad I had come, but at the back of my mind was something that interested me still more The man Mommsen had mentioned, the wonder man living down south. I had tried to speak of him several times, but Mommsen had always turned the subject. He seemed to avoid it as though it were some superstitious belief he dreaded to expose fully lest people should laugh at him.

" However, one night after we had returned from listening to the band of the Legion in the Place Sadi Carnot, I said to him :—

" ' Look here, what about that man ? '

" ' What man ? ' he asked.

" ' That man down south.'

" ' Oh—him. Well, I am going down south, my friend, and will let you know if I see him. And now that you have seen Sidi, what do you propose to do ? '

" ' I would like to go with you.'

" ' Down south ? '

" ' Yes.'

" ' It is hot at this season.'

" ' Never mind ; I can stand heat.'

" ' And the dust ? '

" ' Yes. I want to see the great military road you spoke of and the desert.'

" ' But the Algerian desert is nothing. At least, it is all rocks and stones, a hideous waste till one gets right to the south.'

" ' That's where I want to get,' said I. ' Come, my friend, I have accompanied you so far ; is there any reason why I should not finish the journey with you ? '

" He thought for a moment, and then said ' None.'

IV.

" HE was right, the Algerian desert is a howling wilderness ; no one but a madman would dream of visiting it unless on business, a madman with a passion for desolation, rocks, sun-blaze, and the scum of humanity ; through this desert, however, runs a most excellent road.

" Our car passed Arab villages, sand patches and patches of poorly cultivated ground, and date palms indicating wells, and always, here and there, changeless in their dirt, Arabs.

" Mommsen had brought provisions, and a tent strapped to the car, so that we were independent. He had sent word ahead for

the man with whom he had a business appointment to meet him at a certain place, which turned out to be a village near the end of the great southern road.

" Such a village! Mud walls, hovels, and filth undergoing the sun for garbage cure. Here we found El Habib and the rug which he had brought for sale.

" The bargaining took place in the open, close to the tent which we had pitched, the bargainers seated on the ground in the shelter of the one and only tree, the village standing about watching.

" They were at it for four hours.

" From what I could hear and understand of the conversation, El Habib was recounting his family history, amongst other things, and talking about the Prophet, but it ended at last and so well for Mommsen that before we turned in that night I said to him :—

" ' You see, I have brought you luck, and now I want my reward—a sight of that wonderful man you spoke of. Oh, you thought I had forgotten him! Well, I haven't.'

" ' Well, you shall have a sight of him and judge for yourself.'

" ' When ? '

" ' To-morrow.'

" ' Where ? '

" ' Here.'

" ' Here ? ' said I.

" ' Yes, here,' he answered. ' He's in that house just beyond the village, but he'd be asleep by now. Besides, he's better seen by sunlight.'

" ' He's alive still ? '

" ' Yes; I asked about him when we arrived.'

" In the tent before dropping off to sleep I heard Mommsen speaking to me :—

" ' What would you say if I told you that chap was a thousand years old ? '

" ' I'd say you were a liar.'

" Mommsen chuckled :—

" ' There, I told you—I knew. It's annoying; it's like showing a Kang-He vase to a man ignorant alike of ceramics and history and also without imagination.'

" He spoke half laughing, half the other way.

" ' Never mind,' said I, ' show me your jar and I promise at all events not to criticize it.'

V.

" NEXT morning, an hour after sunrise, we started, Mommsen leading, striking south from the village on a line that, as he said, would have brought us to

" Where does this wonderful man live ? "

Cape Town. A funny thing about North Africa is that you are a biscuit toss from Monte Carlo and the French Riviera, yet within a walk of the Limpopo River and Simon's Bay—if your boots would hold out. They wouldn't hold out long, however, across the country that Mommsen was leading me over, making towards the palm trees that showed cut sharp on the sky on the edge of what proved to be true sandy desert.

"There was a building by the trees and a well. The place was a sort of farm, no more like a Dutch or English farm than a mosquito is like a Christmas turkey, but still there was a patch of cultivated ground and a few goats and a few chickens, also an old Arab woman, and here, seated in the sun on the ground with his back to the wall of the house and with the chickens pecking round it, was a figure.

"'That's he,' said Mommsen.

"He stopped to speak to the woman, then we went on to the man—I was going to have said the lizard. The word sprang into my head at the close sight of him.

"He was destitute of clothes, yet not naked. One might say the same of a lizard. His skin hung in folds and his face as he sat there with his back to the wall in the light of his beloved sun was extraordinary and dreadful. I can't describe it. It suggested the face of a prophet, of a deaf man, of a dead man, of a blind man, of a statue.

"Yet he was not made of stone, nor was he dead, nor was he blind, for his eyes flickered up at us as he sat there drowsing in the sun, neither was he deaf.

"'Last time he told me things,' said Mommsen, as we stood contemplating this Presence around whom the chickens were scratching in complete indifference. 'He can see us and hear us all right, but we are of no use to him. He speaks as a clock strikes, at certain times in the day, and the old woman says that he must be breaking up, as he only says the same thing over and over again when he speaks now. Let's get in that bit of shade and wait for him to strike.'

"There was a palm log lying in the shade made by a projection of the roof, and we took our seats on it. It was quite close to the object of our visit, and as we sat watching him Mommsen talked.

"'IT'S unlucky,' said he, 'if anything has really gone wrong with his works. Last time I was here, and when he had started in and talked on his own for a while, I questioned him and he answered quite easily—and it was interesting. It was about the murder of the prisoners. You remember Napoleon murdered thousands of them—at least, had them killed because there was no food for them. He saw that, though you mayn't believe it.'

"But looking at the figure in the sun I could believe anything almost in that way, and said so.

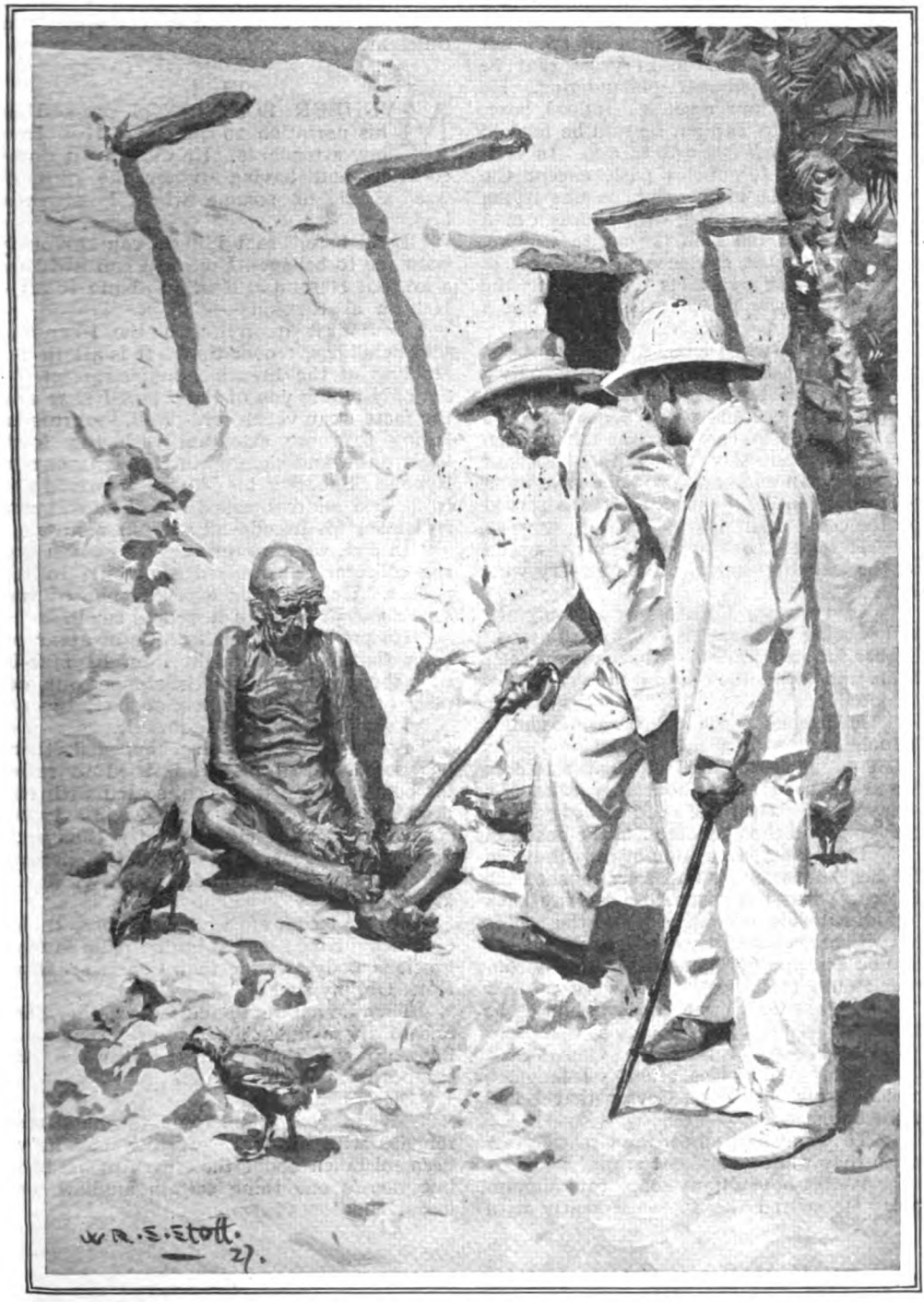
"'All the same,' replied Mommsen, 'between believing a thing to be true and belief there is a long distance. Everyone knows he is going to die, but he doesn't believe it. The fact doesn't get right home to the centre of his mind, it's too vague. Belief must always have a concrete foundation. So I won't ask you to strain yourself, but just accept what I have to say as a series of statements.

"'I don't say I believe—I simply say that in the hands of the French there is evidence going to prove that this man has seen with his own eyes Aaron the orthodox or just, otherwise called Haroun al Raschid, Caliph of Bagdad, who lived in the year 786. It was Tarnier of the Museum at Cairo who first put me on to him, because forty-two years ago this man, who was then not suffering from the senile decay that has suddenly fallen on him, sold to Tarnier's predecessor a manuscript in his own handwriting, "The book of Eyoob," which gave his account of Haroun's treatment of the Barmecide family, which book was stolen by a high French official. There was a woman mixed up in the thing, and the whole business was so highly discreditable to the French administration that it was hushed up. Otherwise the world might have known of this man, who is one of the world's chief wonders—or, at all events, an extraordinarily interesting specimen of humanity.

"'In the archives of the French Government there is hidden away this man's pedigree—that is to say, his dossier. It may be lies, but it's all there set out and evidently attested to.

"'Leaving out his Bagdad experience, it would seem that he was in Egypt in 868, when Ahmed ebn e Tonloon was governor for the Abaside Caliphs. He was master of the works when El Moez built Misr el Kahirah—that is to say, Cairo; under the Kurd Salah e Deen Yoosef ebn Eyoob, who founded the dynasty of the Eyoobites, which lasted till 1250, he held several high positions, and under the Baharite dynasty he was Cadi. He had many wives—that is to say, at that period of his past he had many wives strewn behind him.

"'Under the Memlook Baybers, who took charge in 1261, he was a sort of Minister of Transport to the army that took Armenia, and amongst his plunder he secured a Circassian wife, one of whose relations was Dowlet el Memeleek el Borghéëh, the Circassian slave who took possession of the



His skin hung in folds and his face as he sat there in the light of his beloved sun was extraordinary and dreadful.

throne and founded the dynasty of the Circassian Memlooks which lasted till 1517, when the Sultan Selim conquered Egypt. When Bonaparte took Egypt in 1798 our man was so getting on in years that he determined to forswear philandering. He said he was no longer young. Indeed, later, telling things to Tarnier, he said he felt old but *could not tell how old he was*. In fact, he had clean forgot his past, except the incidents in the manuscript he was trying to sell. Tarnier, dealing with him as a man deals with an old ruin, began to explore, starting with the evidence in the book of Eyoob, digging out facts and rousing the old fellow's memory with them. He was a ruin that could speak.

"'I myself, when I last saw him, got out of him about the Barmecide family and a description of how Sultan Selim punished a man by tying him up in a bag with a live cat. But he's failing. He was failing even then—no connection in his thoughts, for after the man and cat episode he gave me a recipe for making goulash as it was served by the cook of El Moez.

"'If we got him to speak now it would be the last drop out of an almost dry wine skin.'

"'By the way,' I said, as we sat watching and waiting just as people do at the Great Geyser for an eruption, 'what is his name? You said something about the book of Eyoob.'

"'El Eyoob is his name, or was his name; he may have had others. Look!'

"The figure in the sun had suddenly raised its head as if about to speak. We drew closer. Then the head sank again as though it had thought better of the business.

"'Provoking,' said Mommsen. Between the heat and the flies (not a fly touched the Presence) and the desire to get away back to Sidi with his precious rug, and the feeling that if speech came it would be rubbish—or maybe a recipe for goulash—he was beginning to lose patience.

"'Do you really want to hear him?' he asked.

"'I'd *like* to,' I replied. 'One doesn't get a chance like this often.' I laughed, remembering the Great Geyser that I had visited once.

"'They put soap down the Great Geyser when they want to make it erupt,' said I.

"'Well, I haven't any soap,' said Mommsen. He stirred the Presence gently with his foot, and it moved slightly, but gave no word. The strange thing was that it seemed aware of our being there, yet quite indifferent."

VI.

MYNHEER SCHILLINGS paused in his narration to call one of the Java boy attendants. He wanted an onion cocktail, and having written the chit he was about to resume when I stopped him.

"Look here," said I, "do you seriously want me to believe—I mean, I can swallow a lot, but Haroun al Raschid—hang it all—Haroun al Raschid——"

"You must quarrel with the French," said Schillings, "over that. It is all in the archives of the French Administration. I am only telling you of the things I saw and the facts I can vouch for. Well, Mommsen, failing to rouse attention with his foot knelt down and shouted in the right ear of Eyoob. Shouted his name, inquired as to his last address, asked him if he did not remember his friend—all without result.

"In fact, we were turning to go when the rug collector remembered something in his pocket. He had tried every avenue of the senses except those of taste and smell.

"He produced a small bottle of attar of roses that he had bought from El Habib with the rug, and, taking the stopper out, he placed the bottle to the nose of the Subject.

"I shall never forget the result.

"For a moment nothing happened, then he stirred, raised his head, tried to raise his body, and failed. Then, seated with his head up and eyes wide open and in a voice shrill and like the cheeping of a thousand new-born chickens, yet terrible with energy, he cried, seeming to address the withered Mommsen:—

"'Thy breasts are as twin moons, thine eyes delight me; as a bending palm is thy gracious body, whiter than pearls are thy feet. Oh, my soul!'

"Then he fell dumb and fell together like one of those indiarubber figures that you blow up and that collapse when the air escapes from them.

"'He's dead,' said I.

"'Well,' said Mommsen, touching the remains with his foot, 'Tarnier may have been mistaken about the length of his life, but there's one thing certain anyhow, he has lived.'"

CHRISTMAS NUMBER

DEC 6 1927

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

1/6 NET

A. CONAN DOYLE P. G. WODEHOUSE

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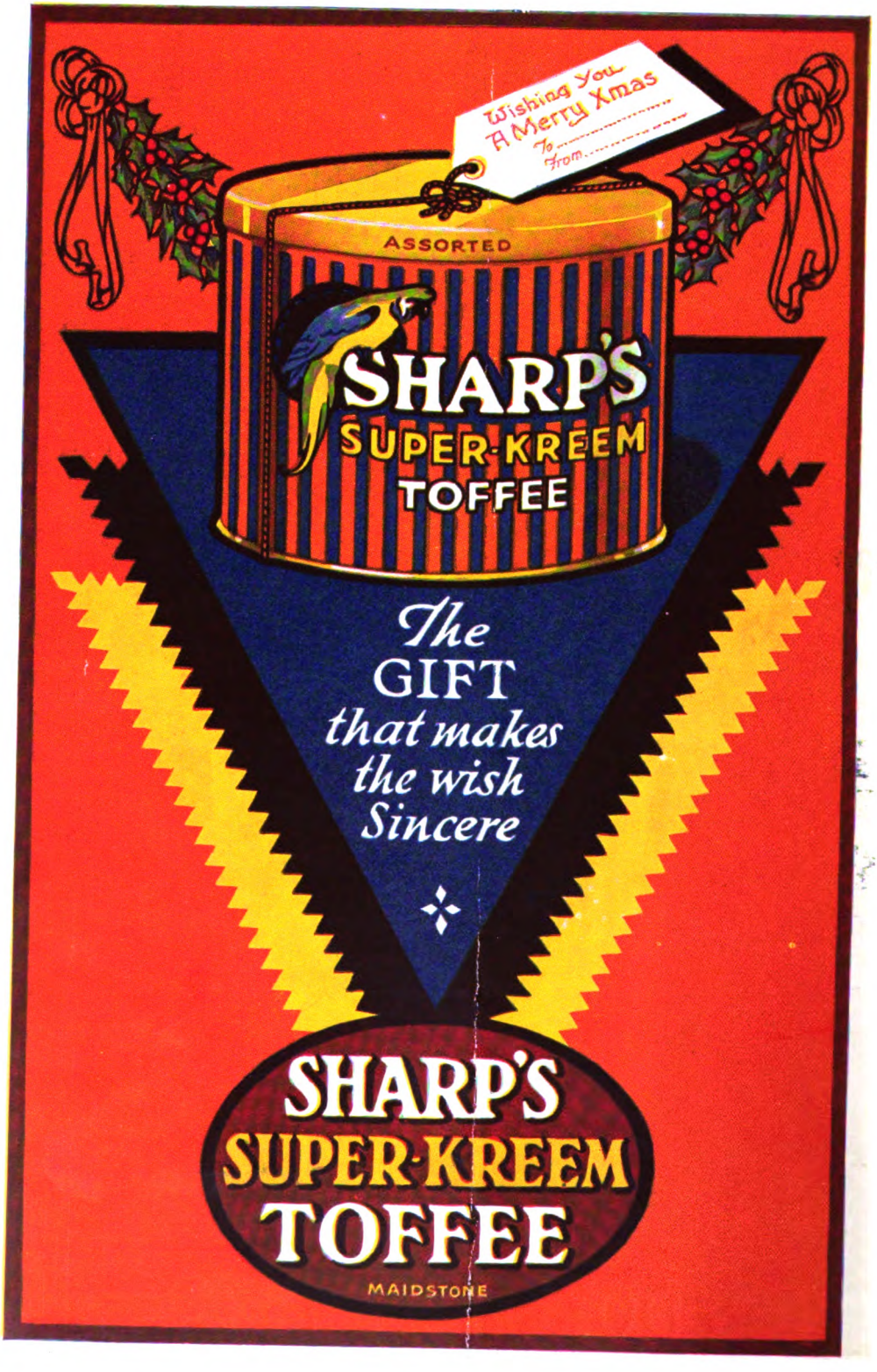
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The Strand Magazine.

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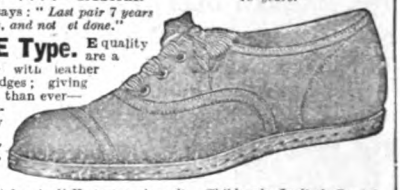

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To face back of Frontispiece.

THE
CHRISTMAS NUMBER
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The STRAND MAGAZINE

December,
1927.

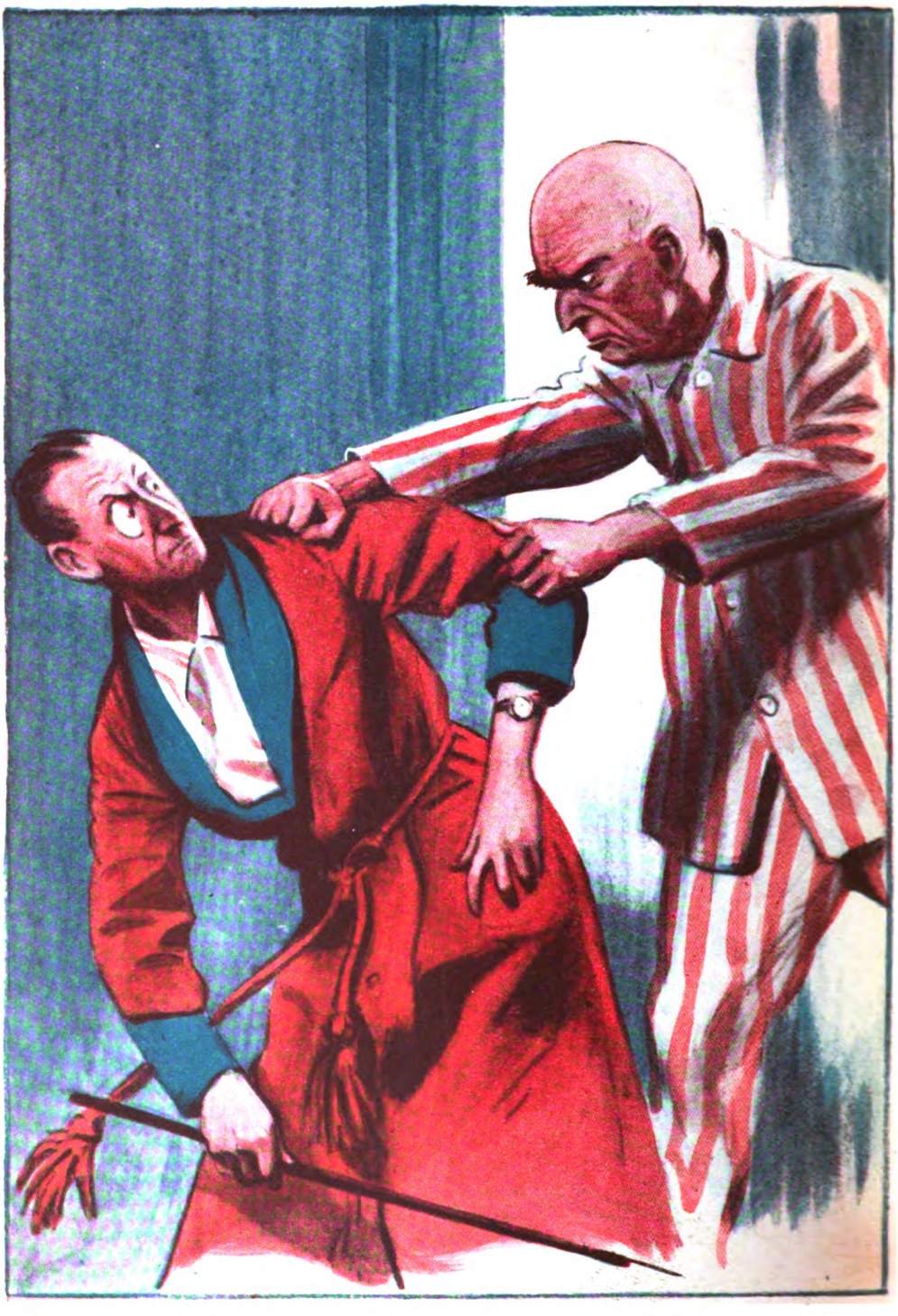
"Roberta Wickham was suggesting the ripest, fruitiest, brainiest scheme for bringing young Tuppy's grey hairs in sorrow to the grave."

"It appears that young Mr. Glossop received the suggestion from the young lady."

"From Miss Wickham?"

"Yes, sir."

See "Jeeves and the Yule-Tide Spirit," by P. G. Wodehouse, on page 531.



THE NEXT MOMENT THE DOOR HAD OPENED, LIGHT WAS STREAMING THROUGH IT, AND THE BLOKE WITH THE VOICE HAD GRABBED ME BY THE ARM.

(See page 538.)

JEEVES and the Yule-Tide Spirit

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

Illustrated by
CHARLES CROMBIE

THE letter arrived on the morning of the sixteenth. I was pushing a bit of breakfast into the Wooster face at the moment; and, feeling fairly well fortified with coffee and kippers, I decided to break the news to Jeeves without delay. As Shakespeare says, if you're going to do a thing you might just as well pop right at it and get it over. The man would be disappointed, of course, and possibly even chagrined; but, dash it all, a spot of disappointment here and there does a fellow good. Makes him realize that life is stern and life is earnest.

"Oh, Jeeves," I said.

"Sir?"

"We have here a communication from Lady Wickham. She has written inviting me to Skeldings for the festive s. So will you see about bunging the necessaries together? We repair thither on the twenty-third. Plenty of white ties, Jeeves, also a few hearty country suits for use in the daytime. We shall be there some little time, I expect."

There was a pause. I could feel he was directing a frosty gaze at me, but I dug into the marmalade and refused to meet it.

"I thought I understood you to say, sir, that you proposed to visit Monte Carlo immediately after Christmas."

"I know. But that's all off. Plans changed."

"Very good, sir."

At this point the telephone bell rang, tiding over very nicely what had threatened to be an awkward moment. Jeeves unhooked the receiver.

"Yes? Yes, madam. Very good, madam. Here is Mr. Wooster." He handed me the instrument. "Mrs. Spenser Gregson, sir."

You know, every now and then I can't help feeling that Jeeves is losing his grip. In his prime it would have been with him the work of a moment to have told my Aunt Agatha that I was not at home. I gave him one of those reproachful glances, and took the machine.

"Hullo?" I said. "Yes? Yes? Yes? Bertie speaking. Hullo? Hullo? Hullo?"

"Don't keep on saying 'Hullo?'" yipped the old relative in her customary curt manner. "You're not a parrot. Sometimes I wish you were, because then you might have a little sense."

Quite the wrong sort of tone to adopt towards a fellow in the early morning, of course; but what can one do?

"Bertie, Lady Wickham tells me she has invited you to Skeldings for Christmas. Are you going?"

"Rather!"

"Don't keep on saying 'Hullo?'" yipped the old relative in her customary curt manner.

Copyright, 1927, by P. G. Wodehouse.

Jeeves and the Yule-Tide Spirit

Roberta welcomed me with a warmth which, I'm bound to say, had set the old heart-strings fluttering a bit.

"Well, mind you behave yourself. Lady Wickham is an old friend of mine."

I was in no mood for this sort of thing over the telephone. Face to face, I'm not saying, but at the end of a wire, no.

"I shall naturally endeavour, Aunt Agatha," I replied, stiffly, "to conduct myself in a manner befitting an English gentleman paying a visit——"

"What did you say? Speak up. I can't hear."

"I said right-ho."

"Oh? Well, mind you do. And there's another reason why I particularly wish you to be as little of an imbecile as you can manage while at Skeldings. Sir Roderick Glossop will be there."

"What!"

"Don't bellow like that. You nearly deafened me."

"Did you say Sir Roderick Glossop?"

"I did."

"You don't mean Tuppy Glossop?"

"I mean Sir Roderick Glossop. Now, Bertie, I want you to listen to me attentively. Are you there?"

"Yes. Still here."

"Well, then, listen. I have at last succeeded, after incredible difficulty and in face of all the evidence, in almost persuading Sir Roderick that you are not actually insane. He is prepared to suspend judgment until he has seen you once more. On your behaviour at Skeldings, therefore——"

But I had hung up the receiver. Shaken. That's what I was. S. to the core.

Stop me if I've told you this before, but, in case you don't know, let me just mention the facts in the matter of this Glossop. He was a formidable old bird with a bald head and outsize eyebrows, by profession a loony-doctor. How it happened, I couldn't tell you to this day, but I once got engaged to his daughter Honoria, a ghastly dynamic exhibit who read Nietzsche and had a laugh like waves breaking on a stern and rock-bound coast. The fixture was scratched owing to events occurring which convinced the old boy that I was off my napper; and since then he has always had my name at the top of his list of Loonies I Have Lunched With.

It seemed to me that even at Christmas-time, with all the peace on earth and good-will towards men that there is knocking about at that season, a reunion with this bloke was likely to be tough going. If I hadn't had more than one particularly good reason for wanting to go to Skeldings, I'd have called the thing off.

"Jeeves," I said, all of a twitter, "do you know what? Sir Roderick Glossop is going to be at Lady Wickham's."

"Very good, sir. If you have finished breakfast, I will clear away."

Cold and haughty. No sympathy. None of the rallying-round spirit which one likes to see. As I had anticipated, the information that we were not going to Monte Carlo had got in amongst him. There is a keen sporting streak in Jeeves, and I knew he had been looking forward to a little flutter at the tables.

We Woosters can wear the mask. I ignored his lack of decent feeling.

"Do so, Jeeves," I said, proudly, "and with all convenient speed."

RELATIONS continued pretty fairly strained all through the rest of the week. There was a frigid detachment in the way the man brought me my dollop of tea in the mornings. Going down to Skeldings in the car on the afternoon of the twenty-third, he was aloof and reserved. And before dinner on the first night of my

visit he put the studs in my dress-shirt in what I can only call a marked manner. The whole thing was extremely painful, and it seemed to me, as I lay in bed on the morning of the twenty-fourth, that the only step to take was to put the whole facts of the case before him and trust to his native good sense to effect an understanding.

I was feeling considerably in the pink that morning. Everything had gone like a breeze. My hostess, Lady Wickham, was a beaky female built far too closely on the lines of my Aunt Agatha for comfort, but she had seemed matey enough on my arrival. Her daughter Roberta had welcomed me with a warmth which, I'm bound to say, had set the old heart-strings fluttering a bit. And Sir Roderick, in the brief moment we had had together, appeared to have let the Yule-tide spirit soak into him to the most amazing extent. When he saw me, his mouth sort of flickered at one corner, which I took to be his idea of smiling, and he said, "Ha, young man!" Not particularly chummily, but he said it; and my view was that it practically amounted to the lion lying down with the lamb.

So, all in all, life at this juncture seemed pretty well all to the mustard, and I decided to tell Jeeves exactly how matters stood.

"Jeeves," I said, as he appeared with the steaming.

"Sir?"

"Touching on this business of our being here, I would like to say a few words of explanation. I consider that you have a right to the facts."

"Not at all, sir."

"I'm afraid scratching that Monte Carlo trip has been a bit of a jar for you, Jeeves."

"Not at all, sir."

"Oh, yes, it has. The heart was set on wintering in the world's good old Plague Spot. I saw your eye light up when I said we were due for a visit there. You snorted a bit and your fingers twitched. I know, I know. And now that there has been a change of programme, the iron has entered into your soul."

"Not at all, sir."

"Oh, yes, it has. I've seen it. Very well, then. What I wish to impress upon you, Jeeves, is that I have not been actuated in this matter by any mere idle whim. It was through no light and airy caprice that I accepted this invitation to Lady Wickham's. I have been angling for it for weeks, prompted by many considerations. In the first place, does one get the Yule-tide spirit at a spot like Monte Carlo?"

"Does one desire the Yule-tide spirit, sir?"

"Certainly one does. I am all for it. Well, that's one thing. Now here's another. It was imperative that I should come to Skeldings for Christmas, Jeeves, because I knew that young Tuppy Glossop was going to be here."

"Sir Roderick Glossop, sir?"

"His nephew. You may have observed hanging about the place a fellow with light hair and a Cheshire cat grin. That is Tuppy, and I have been anxious for some time to get to grips with him. I have it in for that man of wrath. The Wooster honour is involved. Listen to the facts, Jeeves, and tell me if I am not justified in planning a hideous vengeance." I took a sip of tea, for the mere memory of my wrongs had shaken me. "In spite of the fact that young Tuppy is the nephew of Sir Roderick Glossop, at whose hands, Jeeves, as you are aware, I have suffered much, I fraternized with him freely, both at the Drones Club and elsewhere. I said to myself that a man

"This fiend in human shape left me hanging in the void with no means of getting ashore to my home and loved ones."

is not to be blamed for his relations, and that I would hate to have my pals hold my Aunt Agatha, for instance, against me. Broad-minded, Jeeves, I think ? "

" Extremely, sir."

" Well, then, as I say, I sought this Tuppy out, Jeeves, and hobnobbed, and what do you think he did ? "

" I could not say, sir."

" I will tell you. One night after dinner at the Drones he bet me I wouldn't swing myself across the swimming-bath by the ropes and rings. I took him on, and was buzzing along in great style until I came to the last ring. And then I found that this fiend in human shape had looped it back against the rail, thus leaving me hanging in the void with no means of getting ashore to my home and loved ones. There was nothing for it but to drop into the water. He told me that he had often caught fellows that way ; and what I maintain, Jeeves, is that, if I can't get back at him somehow at Skeldings—with all the vast resources which a country house affords at my disposal—I am not the man I was."

so, delicate though the subject was, I decided to put all my cards on the table.

" And now, Jeeves, we come to the most important reason why I had to spend Christmas at Skeldings. Jeeves," I said, diving into the old cup once more for a moment and bringing myself out wreathed in blushes, " the fact of the matter is, I'm in love."

" Indeed, sir ? "

" You've seen Miss Roberta Wickham ? "

" Yes, sir."

" Very well, then."

There was a pause, while I let it sink in.

" During your stay here, Jeeves," I said, " you will, no doubt, be thrown a good deal together with Miss Wickham's maid. On such occasions, pitch it strong."

" Sir ? "

" You know what I mean. Tell her I'm

" Red hair, sir, in my opinion, is dangerous."
I eyed the blighter squarely.
" Jeeves," I said, " you're talking rot."

" I see, sir."

There was still something in his manner which told me that even now he lacked complete sympathy and understanding,

rather a good chap. Mention my hidden depths. These things get round. Dwell on the fact that I have a kind heart and was runner-up in the Squash Handicap at the

Drones this year. A boost is never wasted, Jeeves."

"Very good, sir. But——"

"But what?"

"Well, sir——"

"I wish you wouldn't say 'Well, sir,' in that soupy tone of voice. I have had to speak of this before. The habit is one that is growing upon you. Check it. What's on your mind?"

"I hardly like to take the liberty——"

"Carry on, Jeeves. We are always glad to hear from you, always."

"What I was about to remark, if you will excuse me, sir, was that I would scarcely have thought Miss Wickham a suitable——"

"Jeeves," I said, coldly, "if you have anything to say against that lady, it had better not be said in my presence."

"Very good, sir."

I turned the handle, found the door wasn't locked, and went in.

"Or anywhere else, for that matter. What is your kick against Miss Wickham?"

"Oh, really, sir!"

"Jeeves, I insist. This is a time for plain speaking. You have beefed about Miss Wickham. I wish to know why."

"It merely crossed my mind, sir, that for a gentleman of your description Miss Wickham is not a suitable mate."

"What do you mean by a gentleman of my description?"

"Well, sir——"

"Jeeves!"

"I beg your pardon, sir. The expression escaped me inadvertently. I was about to observe that I can only asseverate——"

"Only what?"

"I can only say that, as you have invited my opinion——"

"But I didn't."

"I was under the impression that you desired to canvass my views on the matter, sir."

"Oh? Well, let's have them, anyway."

"Very good, sir. Then, briefly, if I may say so, sir, though Miss Wickham is a charming young lady——"

"There, Jeeves, you spoke an imperial quart. What eyes!"

"Yes, sir."

"What hair!"

"Very true, sir."

"And what *espièglerie*, if that's the word I want."

"The exact word, sir."

"All right, then. Carry on."

"I grant Miss Wickham the possession of all these desirable qualities, sir. Nevertheless, considered as a matrimonial prospect for a gentleman of your description, I cannot look upon her as suitable. In my opinion, Miss Wickham lacks seriousness, sir. She is too volatile and frivolous. To qualify as Miss Wickham's husband, a gentleman would need to possess a commanding personality and considerable strength of character."

"Exactly!"

"I would always hesitate to recommend as a life's companion a young lady with quite such a vivid shade of red hair. Red hair, sir, in my opinion, is dangerous."

I eyed the blighter squarely.

"Jeeves," I said, "you're talking rot."

"Very good, sir."

"Absolute drivel."

"Very good, sir."

"Pure mashed potatoes."

"Very good, sir."

"Very good, sir—I mean very good, Jeeves, that will be all," I said.

And I drank a modicum of tea with a good deal of hauteur.

IT isn't often that I find myself able to prove Jeeves in the wrong, but by dinner-time that night I was in a position to do so, and I did it without delay.

"Yes, Jeeves. Pretty dashed silly it's going to make you look. It may lead you to be rather more careful in future about broadcasting these estimates of yours of people's characters. This morning, if I remember rightly, you stated that Miss Wickham was volatile, frivolous, and lacking in seriousness. Am I correct?"

"Quite correct, sir."

He had lifted the sheets and was gazing at the corpse of the hot-water bottle. "Did you do this?" he said in a low, strangled sort of voice.

"Touching on that matter we were touching on, Jeeves," I said, coming in from the bath and tackling him as he studded the shirt, "I should be glad if you would give me your careful attention for a moment. I warn you that what I am about to say is going to make you look pretty silly."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Then what I have to tell you may cause you to alter that opinion. I went for a walk with Miss Wickham this afternoon; and, as we walked, I told her about what young Tuppy Glossop did to me in the swimming bath at the Drones. She hung upon my words, Jeeves, and was full of sympathy."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Dripping with it. And that's not all. Almost before I had finished she was suggesting the ripest, fruitiest, brainiest scheme for bringing young Tuppy's grey hairs in sorrow to the grave that anyone could possibly imagine."

"That is very gratifying, sir."

"Gratifying is the word. It appears that at the girls' school where Miss Wickham was educated, Jeeves, it used to become necessary from time to time for the right-thinking element of the community to slip it across certain of the baser sort. Do you know what they did, Jeeves?"

"No, sir."

"They took a long stick, Jeeves, and—follow me closely here—they tied a darning-needle to the end of it. Then at dead of night, it appears, they sneaked privily into the party of the second part's cubicle and shoved the needle through the bedclothes and punctured her hot-water bottle. Girls are much subtler in these matters than boys, Jeeves. At my old school one would occasionally heave a jug of water over another bloke during the night watches, but we never thought of effecting the same result in this particularly neat and scientific manner. Well, Jeeves, that was the scheme which Miss Wickham suggested I should work on young Tuppy, and that is the girl you call frivolous and lacking in seriousness! Any girl who can think up a wheeze like that is my idea of a helpmeet. I shall be glad, Jeeves, if by the time I come to bed to-night you have waiting for me in this room a stout stick with a good sharp darning-needle attached."

"Well, sir——"

I raised my hand.

"Jeeves," I said, "not another word. Stick, one, and needle, darning, good, sharp, one, without fail in this room at eleven-thirty to-night."

"Very good, sir."

"Have you any idea where young Tuppy sleeps?"

"I could ascertain, sir."

"Do so, Jeeves."

In a few minutes he was back with the necessary informash.

"Mr. Glossop is established in the Moat Room, sir."

"Where's that?"

"The second door on the floor below this, sir."

"Right-ho, Jeeves. Are the studs in my shirt?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the links also?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then push me into it."

The more I thought about this enterprise which a sense of duty and good citizenship had thrust upon me, the better it seemed to me. I am not a vindictive man, but I felt, as anybody would have felt in my place, that if fellows like young Tuppy are allowed to get away with it the whole fabric of society and civilization must inevitably crumble. The task to which I had set myself was one that involved hardship and discomfort, for it meant sitting up till well into the small hours and then padding down a cold corridor, but I did not shrink from it. After all, there is a lot to be said for family tradition. We Woosters did our bit in the Crusades.

It being Christmas Eve, there was, as I had foreseen, a good deal of revelry and what not. First the village choir surged round and sang carols outside the front door, and then somebody suggested a dance, and after that we hung around chatting of this and that, so that it wasn't till past one that I got to my room. Allowing for everything, it didn't seem that it was going to be safe to start my little expedition till half-past two at the earliest; and I'm bound to say that it was only the utmost resolution that kept me from snuggling into the sheets and calling it a day. I'm not much of a lad now for late hours.

However, by half-past two everything appeared to be quiet. I shook off the mists of sleep, grabbed the good old stick-and-needle, and off along the corridor. And presently, pausing outside the Moat Room, I turned the handle, found the door wasn't locked, and went in.

I SUPPOSE a burglar—I mean a real professional who works at the job six nights a week all the year round—gets so that finding himself standing in the dark in somebody else's bedroom means absolutely nothing to him. But for a bird like me, who has had no previous experience, there's a lot to be said in favour of washing the whole thing out and closing the door gently and popping back to bed again. It was only by summoning up all the old bulldog courage of the Woosters and reminding myself that, if I let this opportunity slip, another might never occur, that I managed to stick out what you might call the initial minute of the binge. Then the weakness passed, and Bertram was himself again.

At first, when I had beetled in, the room had seemed as black as a coal-cellar; but after a bit things began to lighten. The curtains weren't quite drawn over the window, and I could see a trifle of the scenery here and there. The bed was opposite the window, with the head against the wall and the end where the feet were jutting out towards where I stood, thus rendering it possible after one had sown the seed, so to speak, to make a quick getaway. There

only remained now the rather tricky problem of locating the hot-water bottle. I mean to say, the one thing you can't do if you want to carry a job like this through with secrecy and dispatch is to stand at the end of a fellow's bed, jabbing the blankets at random with a darning needle. Before proceeding to anything in the nature of definite steps, it is imperative that you locate the bot.

I was a good deal cheered at this juncture to hear a fruity snore from the direction of the pillows. Reason told me that a bloke who could snore like that wasn't going to be awakened by a trifle. I edged forward and ran a hand in a gingerly sort of way over the coverlet. A moment later I had found the bulge. I steered the good old darning-needle on to it, gripped the stick, and shoved. Then, pulling out the weapon, I sidled towards the door, and in another moment would have been outside, buzzing for home and the good night's rest, when suddenly there was a crash that sent my spine shooting up through the top of my head, and the contents of the bed sat up like a jack-in-the-box and said :—

"Who's that ?"

It just shows how your most careful strategic moves can be the very ones that dish your campaign. In order to facilitate the orderly retreat according to plan I had left the door open, and the beastly thing had slammed like a bomb.

But I wasn't giving much thought to the causes of the explosion, having other things to occupy my mind. What was disturbing me was the discovery that, whoever else the bloke in the bed might be, he was not young Tuppy. Tuppy has one of those high, squeaky voices that sound like the tenor of the village choir failing to hit a high note. This one was something in between the last trump and a tiger calling for breakfast after being on a diet for a day or two. It was the sort of nasty, rasping voice you hear shouting "Fore!" when you're one of a slow foursome on the links and are holding up a couple of retired colonels. Among the qualities it lacked were kindliness, suavity, and that sort of dove-like cooing note which makes a fellow feel he has found a friend.

I did not linger. Getting swiftly off the mark, I dived for the door handle and was off and away, banging the door behind me. I may be a chump in many ways, as my Aunt Agatha will freely attest, but I know when and when not to be among those present.

And I was just about to do the stretch of corridor leading to the stairs in a split second under the record time for the course, when something brought me up with a sudden jerk. One moment I was all dash and fire and speed ; the next, an irresistible force had checked me in my stride and was holding me straining at the leash, as it were.

You know, sometimes it seems as if Fate were going out of its way to such an extent to snooter you that you wonder if it's worth while continuing to struggle. The night being a trifle chillier than the dickens, I had donned for this expedition a dressing-gown. It was the tail of this infernal garment that had caught in the door and pipped me at the eleventh hour.

The next moment the door had opened, light was streaming through it, and the bloke with the voice had grabbed me by the arm.

It was Sir Roderick Glossop!

THE next thing that happened was a bit of a lull in the proceedings. For about three and a quarter seconds, or possibly more, we just stood there, drinking each other in, so to speak, the old boy still attached with a limpet-like grip to my elbow. If I hadn't been in a dressing-gown and he in pink-striped pyjamas, and if he hadn't been glaring quite so much as if he were shortly going to commit a murder, the tableau would have looked rather like one of those advertisements you see in the magazines, where the experienced elder is patting the young man's arm and saying to him, "My boy, if you subscribe to the Mutt-Jeff Correspondence School of Oswego, Kan., as I did, you may some day, like me, become Third Assistant Vice-President of the Schenectady Consolidated Nail-File and Eyebrow-Tweezer Corporation."

"You!" said Sir Roderick, finally. And in this connection I want to state that it's all rot to say you can't hiss a word that hasn't an "s" in it. The way he pushed out that "You!" sounded like an angry cobra, and I am betraying no secrets when I mention that it did me no good whatsoever.

By rights, I suppose, at this point I ought to have said something. The best I could manage, however, was a faint, soft bleating sound. Even on ordinary social occasions, when meeting this bloke as man to man and with a clear conscience, I could never be completely at my ease ; and now those eyebrows seemed to pierce me like a knife.

"Come in here," he said, lugging me into the room. "We don't want to wake the whole house. Now," he said, depositing me on the carpet and closing the door and doing a bit of eyebrow-work, "kindly inform me what is this latest manifestation of insanity ?"

It seemed to me that a light and cheery

laugh might help the thing along. So I had a pop at one.

"Don't gibber!" said my genial host. And I'm bound to admit that the light and cheery hadn't come out quite as I'd intended.

I pulled myself together with a strong effort.

"Awfully sorry about all this," I said in a hearty sort of voice. "The fact is, I thought you were Tuppy."

"Kindly refrain from inflicting your idiotic slang on me. What do you mean by the adjective 'tuppy'?"

"It isn't so much an adjective, don't you know. More of a noun, I should think, if you examine it squarely. What I mean to say is, I thought you were your nephew."

"You thought I was my nephew? Why should I be my nephew?"

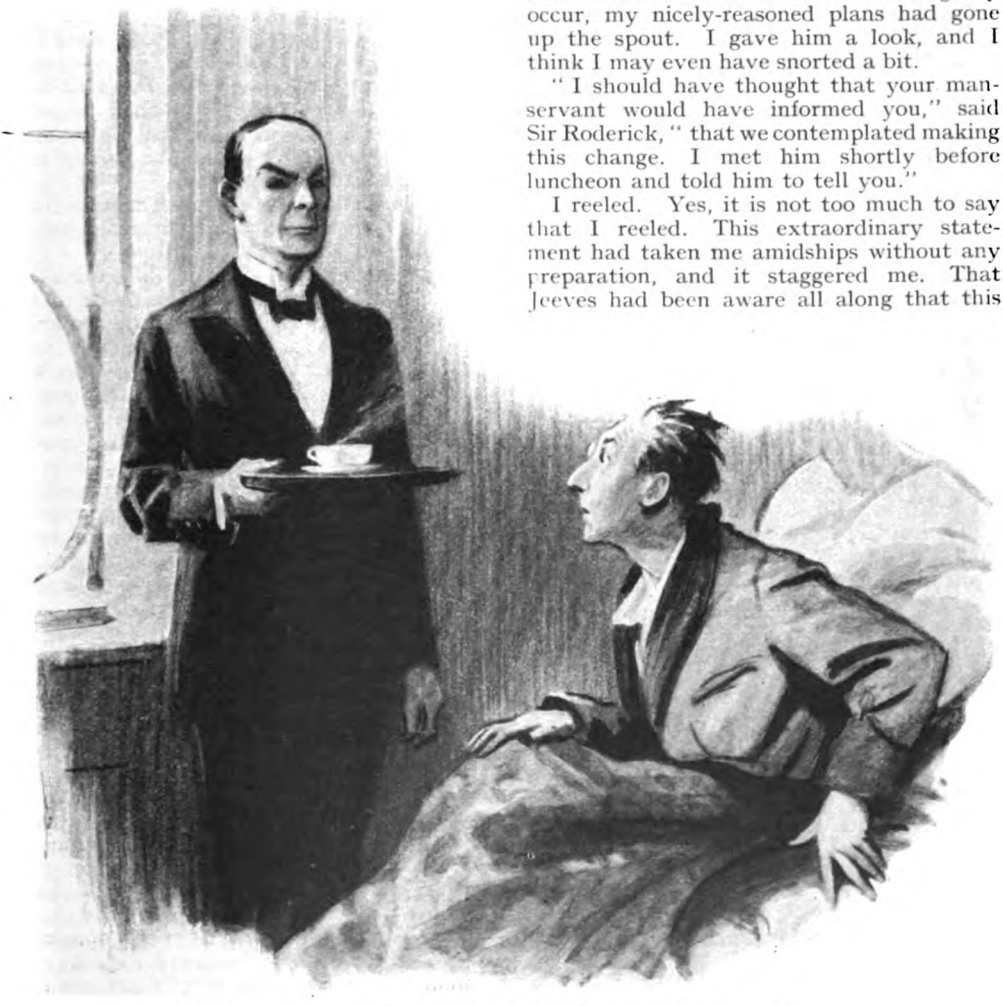
"What I'm driving at is, I thought this was his room."

"My nephew and I changed rooms. I have a great dislike for sleeping on an upper floor. I am nervous about fire."

For the first time since this interview had started, I braced up a trifle. The injustice of the whole thing stirred me to such an extent that for a moment I lost that sense of being a toad under the harrow which had been cramping my style up till now. I even went so far as to eye this pyjamaed poltroon with a good deal of contempt and loathing. Just because he had this craven fear of fire and this selfish preference for letting Tuppy be cooked instead of himself should the emergency occur, my nicely-reasoned plans had gone up the spout. I gave him a look, and I think I may even have snorted a bit.

"I should have thought that your manservant would have informed you," said Sir Roderick, "that we contemplated making this change. I met him shortly before luncheon and told him to tell you."

I reeled. Yes, it is not too much to say that I reeled. This extraordinary statement had taken me amidships without any preparation, and it staggered me. That Jeeves had been aware all along that this



Jeeves was standing beside me with a cup of tea on a tray. "Merry Christmas, sir!"

old crumb would be the occupant of the bed which I was proposing to prod with darning-needles and had let me rush upon my doom without a word of warning was almost beyond belief. You might say I was aghast. Yes, practically aghast.

"You told Jeeves that you were going to sleep in this room?" I gasped.

"I did. I was aware that you and my nephew were on terms of intimacy, and I wished to spare myself the possibility of a visit from you. I confess that it never occurred to me that such a visit was to be anticipated at three o'clock in the morning. What the devil do you mean," he barked, suddenly hotting up, "by prowling about the house at this hour? And what is that thing in your hand?"

I looked down, and found that I was still grasping the stick. I give you my honest word that, what with the maelstrom of emotions into which his revelation about Jeeves had cast me, the discovery came as an absolute surprise.

"This?" I said. "Oh, yes."

"What do you mean, 'Oh, yes'? What is it?"

"Well, it's a long story——"

"We have the night before us."

"It's this way. I will ask you to picture me some weeks ago, perfectly peaceful and inoffensive, after dinner at the Drones, smoking a thoughtful cigarette and——"

I broke off. The man wasn't listening. He was goggling in a rapt sort of way at the end of the bed, from which there had now begun to drip on to the carpet a series of drops.

"Good heavens!"

"——thoughtful cigarette and chatting pleasantly of this and that ——"

I broke off again. He had lifted the sheets and was gazing at the corpse of the hot-water bottle.

"Did you do this?" he said in a low, strangled sort of voice.

"Er—yes. As a matter of fact, yes. I was just going to tell you——"

"And your aunt tried to persuade me that you were not insane!"

"I'm not. Absolutely not. If you'll just let me explain."

"I will do nothing of the kind."

"It all began——"

"Silence!"

"Right-ho."

He did some deep-breathing exercises through the nose.

"My bed is drenched!"

"The way it all began——"

"Be quiet!" He heaved somewhat for awhile. "You wretched, miserable idiot," he said, "kindly inform me which bedroom you are supposed to be occupying."

"It's on the floor above. The Clock Room."

"Thank you. I will find it."

"Eh?"

He gave me the eyebrow.

"I propose," he said, "to pass the remainder of the night in your room, where, I presume, there is a bed in a condition to be slept in. You may bestow yourself as comfortably as you can here. I will wish you good night."

He buzzed off, leaving me flat.

WELL, we Woosters are old campaigners. We can take the rough with the smooth. But to say that I liked the prospect now before me would be paltering with the truth. One glance at the bed told me that any idea of sleeping there was out. A goldfish could have done it, but not Bertram. After a bit of a look round, I decided that the best chance of getting a sort of night's rest was to doss as well as I could in the arm-chair. I pinched a couple of pillows off the bed, shoved the hearth-rug over my knees, and sat down and started counting sheep.

But it wasn't any good. The old bulb was sizzling much too much to admit of anything in the nature of slumber. The hideous revelation of the blackness of Jeeves's treachery kept coming back to me every time I nearly succeeded in dropping off; and, what's more, it seemed to get colder and colder as the long night wore on. I was just wondering if I would ever get to sleep again in this world when a voice at my elbow said, "Good morning, sir," and I sat up with a jerk.

I could have sworn I hadn't so much as dozed off for even a minute, but apparently I had. For the curtains were drawn back and daylight was coming in through the window, and there was Jeeves standing beside me with a cup of tea on a tray.

"Merry Christmas, sir!"

I reached out a feeble hand for the restoring brew. I swallowed a mouthful or two, and felt a little better. I was aching in every limb and the dome felt like lead, but I was now able to think with a certain amount of clearness, and I fixed the man with a stony eye and prepared to let him have it.

"You think so, do you?" I said. "Much, let me tell you, depends on what you mean by the adjective 'merry.' If, moreover, you suppose that it is going to be merry for you, correct that impression. Jeeves," I said, taking another half-oz. of tea and speaking in a cold, measured voice, "I wish to ask you one question. Did you or did you not know that Sir Roderick Glossop was sleeping in this room last night?"

"Yes, sir."

" You admit it ! "

" Yes, sir."

" And you didn't tell me ! "

" No, sir. I thought it would be more judicious not to do so."

" Jeeves——"

" If you will allow me to explain, sir."

" Explain ! "

" I was aware that my silence might lead to something in the nature of an embarrassing *contretemps*, sir——"

" You thought that, did you ? "

" Yes, sir."

" You were a good guesser," I said, sucking down further Bohea.

" But it seemed to me, sir, that whatever might occur was all for the best."

I would have put in a crisp word or two here, but he carried on without giving me the opp.

" I thought that possibly, on reflection, sir, your views being what they are, you would prefer your relations with Sir Roderick Glossop and his family to be distant rather than cordial."

" My views ? What do you mean, my views ? "

" As regards a matrimonial alliance with Miss Honoria Glossop, sir."

SOMETHING like an electric shock seemed to zip through me. The man had opened up a new line of thought. I suddenly saw what he was driving at, and realized all in a flash that I had been wronging this faithful fellow. All the while I supposed he had been landing me in the soup, he had really been steering me away from it. It was like those stories one used to read as a kid about the traveller going along on a dark night and his dog grabs him by the leg of his trousers and he says " Down, sir ! What are you doing, Rover ? " and the dog hangs on and he gets rather hot under the collar and curses a bit, but the dog won't let him go, and then suddenly the moon shines through the clouds and he finds he's been standing on the edge of a precipice and one more step would have—well, anyway, you get the idea ; and what I'm driving at is that much the same sort of thing seemed to have been happening now.

It's perfectly amazing how a fellow will let himself get off his guard and ignore the perils which surround him. I give you my honest word, it had never struck me till this moment that my Aunt Agatha had been scheming to get me in right with Sir Roderick so that I should eventually be received back into the fold, if you see what I mean, and subsequently pushed off on Honoria.

" My God, Jeeves ! " I said, paling.

" Precisely, sir."

" You think there was a risk ? "

" I do, sir. A very grave risk."

A disturbing thought struck me.

" But, Jeeves, on calm reflection, won't Sir Roderick have gathered by now that my objective was young Tuppy, and that puncturing his hot-water bottle was just one of those things that occur when the Yule-tide spirit is abroad—one of those things that have to be overlooked and taken with the indulgent smile and the fatherly shake of the head ? I mean to say, Young Blood, and all that sort of thing ? What I mean is, he'll realize that I wasn't trying to snooter him, and then all the good work will have been wasted."

" No, sir. I fancy not. That might possibly have been Sir Roderick's mental reaction, had it not been for the second incident."

" The second incident ? "

" During the night, sir, while Sir Roderick was occupying your bed, somebody entered the room, pierced his hot-water bottle with some sharp instrument, and vanished in the darkness."

I could make nothing of this.

" What ! Do you think I walked in my sleep ? "

" No, sir. It was young Mr. Glossop who did it. I encountered him this morning, sir, shortly before I came here. He was in cheerful spirits and inquired of me how you were feeling about the incident. Not being aware that his victim had been Sir Roderick."

" But, Jeeves, what an amazing coincidence ! "

" Sir ? "

" Why, young Tuppy getting exactly the same idea as I did. Or, rather, as Miss Wickham did. You can't say that's not rummy. A miracle, I call it."

" Not altogether, sir. It appears that he received the suggestion from the young lady."

" From Miss Wickham ? "

" Yes, sir."

" You mean to say that, after she had put me up to the scheme of puncturing Tuppy's hot-water bottle, she went off and tipped Tuppy off to puncturing mine ? "

" Precisely, sir. She is a young lady with a keen sense of humour, sir."

I sat there, you might say stunned. When I thought how near I had come to offering the Wooster heart and hand to a girl capable of double-crossing a strong man's honest love like that, I shivered.

" Are you cold, sir ? "

" No, Jeeves. Just shuddering."

" The occurrence, if I may take the liberty of saying so, sir, will perhaps lend colour to the view which I put forward

yesterday that Miss Wickham, though in many respects a charming young lady——"

I raised the hand.

"Say no more, Jeeves," I replied. "Love is dead."

"Very good, sir."

I brooded for awhile.

"You've seen Sir Roderick this morning then?"

"Yes, sir."

"How did he seem?"

"A trifle feverish, sir. A little emotional. He expressed a strong desire to meet you, sir."

"What would you advise?"

"If you were to slip out by the back entrance as soon as you are dressed, sir, it would be possible for you to make your way across the fields without being observed and reach the village, where you could hire an automobile to take you to London. I could bring on your effects later in your own car."

"But London, Jeeves? Is any man safe? My Aunt Agatha is in London."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, then?"

He regarded me for a moment with a fathomless eye.

"I think the best plan, sir, would be for you to leave England, which is not pleasant at this time of the year, for some little while. I would not take the liberty of dictating your movements, sir, but as you already have accommodation engaged on the Blue Train for Monte Carlo for the day after to-morrow——"

"But you cancelled the booking?"

"No, sir."

"I thought you had."

"No, sir."

"I told you to."

"Yes, sir. It was remiss of me, but the matter slipped my mind."

"Oh?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right, Jeeves. Monte Carlo be then."

"Very good, sir."

"It's lucky, as things have turned out, that you forgot to cancel that booking."

"Very fortunate indeed, sir. If you will wait here, sir, I will return to your room and procure a suit of clothes."

ACROSTICS.

OUR thirty-seventh series of acrostics begins with **No. 173**, printed below, and will run for four months. Prizes to the value of twelve guineas will be awarded to the most successful solvers.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 173.

A FAMOUS English novelist we view,
Who gave us Pickwick, and Micawber too

1. Winged boy with bow and arrows,
   Lovers he delights and harrows.
2. If Henry were a Frenchman, well, it
   Is not as Henry he would spell it.
3. Sailing to New York? Your notion
   Seems to be to cross this ocean.
4. Bird that caws, the farmer hates him,
   Often checks a king, or mates him
5. Not in time, but folk assever
   Better this it is than never.
6. Cricket team I now am sending.
   Number? Odd, with even ending.
7. William Tell was of this nation,
   And this Cottage is a station.

BOODLEBAR

Answers to Acrostic No. 173 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on December 10th. They must be written on half-sheets of notepaper, or on cards; at the foot of the solution must appear the solver's pseudonym, which must consist of one word only. Nothing else must be written on the same paper. Flimsy paper should not be used.*

To every light one alternative answer may be sent, provided that it is written at the side.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 172.

WHEN bivalves beautified a garden fair,
What other lovely ornaments were there?

1. Two parallels across two parallels—
   A little higher up, the signal tells.
2. Find mountain in a certain island, and
   Your thoughts may turn at once to Babyland.
3. Of prayerful past present equivalent,
   What careless days in happy youth we spent!
4. Where coins are found in corners, this is heard.
   Folks find it comes, a not uncommon word.
5. Fellow whose name among the great is writ;
   'Tis almost always shortened down a bit.
6. As tree and soldier 'tis to England known;
   Here the French name two letters must disown.
7. Hence came the sign to murderer accurst:
   Adam and Eve would seem to be reversed.
8. The purple vest with decent care disposed,
   The silver ring she pull'd, the door reclosed.
9. Here was a mighty slaughter, grim and great
   Twenty years on, how sad the victor's fate!
10. Should poem headless headless poet meet,
    Left-handed writer would be incomplete.
11. Curls? 'Tis not so, unless we judge by sound
    The colleague's name within a foot is found.

PAX

1. S	har	P
2. I	ncubato	R
3. L	ightsom	E
4. V	ien	T
5. E	veres	T
6. R	ign	Y
7. B	irna	M
8. E	uryele	A
9. L	eh	I
10. L	conar	D
11. S	pier	S

NOTES.—Light 1. Musical. 2. In Cuba tor; chickens. 3. Litany, prayer. Present, light; past, lit; some, any. 4. French, *coins*, corners; *rient*, comes. 5. The mountain is called after Sir George Everest, Fellow of the Royal Society; almost always, shortened—most always—ever, superlative. 6. Alderney, Aurigny. 7. Macbeth; manrib. 8. Pope's translation of the Odyssey, book I. last section. 9. Samson. 10. R. Browning, Cleon; bard, poet Leonardo da Vinci. 11. Spires, by sound; Spiers and Peel, spondee.

EXPERIENCES OF
A BOND STREET JEWELLER

THE DIAMOND PARURE

By

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

Illustrated by
STANLEY LLOYD

I.

WHEN I became a salesman old Mr. Rappington said to me: "Never let me see you with soiled collar or cuffs." He never did. But I do not take too literally the old tag: *Fine feathers make fine birds.* Still, in a business such as ours appearances count; and a lady customer is at her best in her best. I have set down these experiences, not in chronological sequence, but as they flitted into my head, and with some assistance from Mrs. Corwen, whose memory, particularly of incidents that I have tried to forget, is evergreen. She reminded me yesterday of the lady whom she styles, with a touch of malice, "*my* Countess." I have never owned a countess, and have no wish to do so.

This post-war experience happened before Mr. Rappington retired, leaving me head of our firm. I was alone in my room when a dazzling stranger was shown in, Madame la Comtesse de Castel-Villebois. It is not easy to describe her. Perhaps I had better admit frankly that I took her for what she appeared to be, a Frenchwoman and a Parisienne, the smartest of the smart. She introduced herself as the personal friend of a customer of ours, a *compatriote* of high rank. I begged her to sit down and tell me what I could do for her. Somewhat to my surprise, she asked me if we dealt in second-hand jewellery. Well, we do and we don't. Since the war I have sold on commission family jewels that the owners were unwilling to put up to public auction at Christie's. Now and again heirlooms left in our custody for many years are brought up from our vaults and taken from their oak chests to be appraised by me—a thankless job. Upon more than one occasion the owner actually didn't know, and nor did we, what he might find in a coffer that had not seen the light of day for generations. Bankers and goldsmiths give (without charge) these strong-boxes house-room, but they are delivered sealed, and there is no responsibility in regard to their contents. I asked the Countess what she meant by second-hand jewellery.

"Big pieces that need resetting. One finds in them the best stones. And perhaps one finds, also, a bargain. I missed securing the other day an old-fashioned *parure*——"

Parures, like powdered footmen, belong to the pomps and vanities of Yesterday. And yet, oddly enough, I did have a *parure* in my safe at that moment. Did she know this? I cannot say. There is no leakage in our establishment.

I showed madame the *parure*. It was enshrined in a beautiful shagreen case and consisted of a *rivière* of diamonds, a tiara, a pair of earrings, and a brooch. The setting was good but old-fashioned; the diamonds were of the finest quality, East Indian stones, probably from Golconda. And it belonged to a boy not yet at Eton! His trustees had instructed us to sell it.

Now this *parure* had historical interest, which appeals enormously to transpontine

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customers. Rappington was of opinion that I could sell it in New York, and I may perhaps be pardoned if I add that I made certain I could. On the other hand, we, or the trustees, would have to pay heavy duty, and this the trustees declined to do. Not to put a fine point on it, they were troublesome and dilatory, aided and abetted by their solicitors. We advised them to break up the *parure* and sell the stones. We offered to buy them. But no, they dillied and dallied till I lost all patience. They wanted a bid from some private person and took for granted that we could find the person. The lowest bid these gentlemen were prepared to accept was in excess of the value of the diamonds. Otherwise we might have bought it ourselves.

My Countess bought it—and paid for it. For my life I could not determine whether she wanted it for herself or to resell. It occurred to me that she might be an agent, but do agents scribble cheques for seven thousand guineas which are promptly honoured? The shagreen case remained in my safe. Finally she took it to her hotel, kept it there for a few days, and brought it back. We examined together the different pieces, putting a price on each.

"I am going to New York," she said. "If I sell the *parure* as a whole I shall have to pay duty, but I may sell the earrings and the *rivière* and keep the tiara. How shall I arrange that with their odious Customs?"

I told her that the full duty would be charged, and that she could recover part of it if she brought back the tiara after selling the other pieces.

At this point she said, with a gay laugh:—

"Don't be shocked, Mr. Corwen, but do you think I could smuggle it in?"

I entreated her to attempt nothing so risky, and, not knowing whether she was jesting, said more on the subject than I intended to say. It is a fact—account for it how you please—that it is almost impossible for any well-known American to buy valuable jewellery in London or Paris—or, indeed, anywhere else—without it coming to the notice of the Custom House officials. They may have their own Secret Service; I don't know. The fact obtrudes itself that smuggling on a big scale is detected and severely punished. You can hide diamonds in the heels of your shoes, but they are found there. I went on to tell her what to do. Let her insure the *parure* first; then, during the voyage, she would do well to entrust it to the purser. Before landing she would declare possession of it, state what she had paid for it, and, as corroborative evidence, show the officials our receipt for her money. The usual duty would be charged.

"How kind of you, *mon cher monsieur*, to instruct me so patiently. I shall do what you say."

"It is the wise thing to do, madame."

II.

I AM the last man in the world to affirm that the code of honour amongst men is higher than amongst women. I say it is different, particularly in matters of business. Personally speaking, I do not regard smuggling as a venial offence, but most women do. Nor do I discriminate between smuggling on a large or small scale. I declare the few cigars that I take with me to Paris, and if I bring back a large bottle of eau-de-Cologne for Mrs. Corwen I pay duty on that.

I remember that I was not too easy in my mind about the Countess. I liked her, because she had been so pleasant and unaffected with me. At our first meeting I had told her that I was going to New York and would have taken the *parure* with me if the trustees had not raised objections. Possibly what I said put the idea into her mind that she might sell to advantage in New York. I had booked my passage. I was crossing on business of importance, for we had just acquired an interest in one of the oldest jewellery stores in Philadelphia. I was loath to go, but I had to go, and hoped to get back within three weeks.

A week before I embarked at Southampton the Countess asked me to do her a favour. To my relief, she placed herself and the *parure* unreservedly in my hands. She had booked her passage to New York in the same huge floating hotel selected by me. She hoped I would be "nice" to her *en voyage*; and would I see the *parure* through the Customs and then deliver it to her after?

"You have abandoned the idea of smuggling it?"

"I was only joking. If I had meant to do such a silly thing would I have told you?"

"Perhaps not. I will take your *parure* with me, insure it, see it through the Customs, and then, later on, if you wish to sell part of it, I may be able to help you."

She clapped her pretty hands like a child.

"How good—how kind you are!"

She prattled away about her friends in America; it would be her pleasure to do me a good turn if she could. Famous names rippled off her tongue. Somehow she made me realize that a personal acquaintance with multi-millionaires might justify me in prolonging my stay in the land of the bone-dry free.

"My friends over there know you by reputation, Mr. Corwen."

She spoke English with a slight accent which was most engaging. Her last words

convinced me that she counted me amongst her friends.

"I am going to join my husband, but whether I live with him or divorce him is—how you put it?—yes, on the knees of the gods."

You will say that a lady of quality would never have said this to a tradesman? Then

"My weakness is diamonds," said the Countess. "Ah! they are irresistible when they are good. It was wicked of me to buy that *parure*."
"But why—if you could pay for it?"

you don't know ladies of quality. They can and do say anything.

I ought to have mentioned before that Rappington, when I told him that I had sold the *parure* (and before the cheque was presented), had looked up the Countess either in the "Almanach de Gotha" or in some Paris directory. The Count de Castel-Villebois belonged to one of the best families in France. These things are a matter of form. To me the credentials of this dear lady were inscribed upon her face.

I repeat, I liked her and she liked me.

III.

WE had tea together as we were passing the Needles. The barometer stood at "Set Fair." In June there are not too many passengers outward bound; the travel is setting the other way.

"It is so funny," she confided to me. "I don't know anybody except you, Mr. Corwen. How smooth the sea is! What a delicious breeze! I am going to enjoy myself."

She did—and so did I. I have never met a more agreeable travelling companion. Her

esprit Gaulois never failed. Like all her accomplished fellow-countrywomen, she could make much out of little, alert to the humours of the moment and a creature of the liveliest fancy, never bored, never absent-minded, never cross.

Within twenty-four hours she confided to me troubles that might have worried most wives. I gathered that M. le Comte was a gay spark who had made a marriage of convenience. It was not easy to believe that any man with eyes in his head could have married so bewitching a little lady for her money alone, but the Countess insisted that this had been the case.

"I loved him because he was the first, but he had loved so many before me. Perhaps because he has loved so much *le bon Dieu* will pardon him, poor fellow!"

"Perhaps, madame, *you* will pardon him?" I ventured to ask.

"We shall see. For the rest, I am independent of him and everybody else. Still, I have my weakness; and you are so clever you will have guessed what it is."

I hadn't. At first sight I might have thought that she gave more than ordinary attention to her clothes, because she turned herself out so beautifully, but I soon discovered that "chiffons" were to her accessories. She had said lightly:—

"I go to the best people. I put myself in their hands—*voilà!*"

Certainly, as I observed at the time, they had done their subject justice.

"My weakness is diamonds. Ah! they are irresistible when they are good. I am practical about everything else. It was wicked of me to buy that *parure*."

"But why—if you could pay for it?"

"*Tiens!* How you put it? Yes—I rob Peter to pay Paul. Good! I shall call you—Paul. To pay you, I rob Peter. I am Peter who picked a peck of pickled pepper. And it makes me sneeze. Yes—I have robbed myself of money I need badly. I must sell the *rivière* and that stupid brooch; I may be able to keep the tiara and those adorable earrings. But the tiara is too big. Tell me, would it be a crime to break it up? Such a famous piece! Say what you think, *mon cher Paul*."

She was touching me on my weak spot. Mrs. Corwen says that I'm incurably romantic. The *rivière*, for instance, had glittered upon a lovely neck that had lost its head in the Terror. The shagreen case had crossed from France to England in a fishing smack. An impoverished *émigré* had sold it to the head of one of our great Whig families. The *parure*, in all its splendour, had been worn at the Duchess of Richmond's ball upon the eve of Waterloo.

"I think," said I, cautiously, "that it would be wise of you to sell *all* the pieces to one person. I could arrange that for you. I could secure the necessary publicity. The New York Press, without any expense to either of us, would advertise the fact that a representative of a well-known Bond Street firm had brought this historical *parure* to America to sell to the highest bidder. There would be no complications incidental to getting back part of the duty if you retained some of the pieces. Humanly speaking, you would make a profit on the deal large enough to buy a tiara designed for you, and you could select the stones."

Her eyes sparkled with anticipation.

"You would make the tiara for me, and help me to choose the diamonds?"

"Gladly."

"And, practically, I should have it for nothing?"

"I think that your profit might be anything between one and two thousand pounds. Best of all, a magnificent specimen of eighteenth century craftsmanship would not be broken up."

"You are the kindest man! What a good friend! Yes, yes, I hesitate no longer; but"—she smiled roguishly—"if—if I change my mind when we get to New York, you won't be cross? I may—who knows?—adjust things with my husband."

We left it at that.

IV.

SANDY HOOK came into sight much too soon for me. I'm an elderly man and devoted to my wife, but surely at my age friendship is possible between two persons of opposite sex. My Countess and I passed a few delightful days together. Not a word was said that couldn't have been overheard by our fellow-passengers.

I had nothing to declare except the *parure*, but I was asked one or two questions when I did declare it. The officials who came on board with the pilot were satisfied with my answers. I was taking an historical piece to sell in America if I could at a fancy price. I should have to give a bond to cover the duty that would be payable if I did sell it. If I couldn't sell it the bond would be cancelled when I took the *parure* back to England. The name of my Countess was not mentioned. My valuation of the stones was not disputed. On landing the usual formalities would be observed.

I took leave of my charming friend before we docked. She told me the name of her hotel, and she promised to call at mine about tea-time.

We went ashore.

Her luggage was under "V," and mine, what little I had, under "C," so we were far apart, but I could see her in the distance

talking with a tall, fair man who might possibly be her husband.

I had the *parure* in a large handbag. An official invited me to go with him to some office. A porter carried my suit-case. I couldn't understand the delay that followed, but supposed vaguely that I was dealing with underlings, and that they were waiting for an expert who might question my valuation. I unlocked my handbag and placed it on the table.

A second official joined us, asked to see my passport, and examined it attentively.

"You are a partner of Rappington and Corwen, of Bond Street, London?"

"I am."

"Is this your first visit to the United States?"

"It is."

"You have nothing to declare *except* this *parure?*"

"Absolutely nothing."

"I am afraid, Mr. Corwen, that we shall have to satisfy ourselves on that point."

"Certainly."

I sat there in a grey flannel suit with my light overcoat on my arm. They searched my suit-case and handbag very carefully, replaced my belongings, and opened the shagreen case. One man took each piece in turn and examined it under a lens. I took him to be the expert. Another man examined the empty case. It was lined with shabby green velvet. He measured the case, took from a drawer a small cold chisel, and began to prise up the bed of the case upon which the different pieces rested. It was in my mind to protest, but I could see that he knew his business and was doing little or no damage.

An exclamation escaped him.

To my utter amazement and consternation he held up a diamond that must have weighed two carats. The expert joined him.

"What a haul!" he ejaculated.

They took from the bottom of the shagreen case at least twenty large diamonds, and laid them upon a sheet of blotting-paper.

"What have you to say?" asked the man who had found them.

"Only this," I gasped. "I had not the remotest idea that these diamonds were in my possession. They do not belong to me. I've never seen them before."

I spoke with extreme agitation. There wasn't a doubt in my mind of what had taken place. My Countess—was she a countess?—using me as her innocent accomplice, had placed these diamonds where they were found. She was a smuggler—and the Custom House officials had been too sharp for her. Even then, infuriated as I was at my humiliating position, I hated to denounce her. Time enough, I decided, to do that later on. I must say that I was treated with consideration. I recalled what Mrs. Pengarvis had said long ago about my face and whiskers. The whiskers had gone, but the face was still there.

"MAY I look at these stones?" I asked. I took his lens and examined each stone in turn. At a rough valuation they were worth in Bond Street about ten thousand pounds. The two-carat stone was one of the smallest. My mind was singularly active—and my imagination. I saw endless complications and implications. Confiscation of the unset stones *and the parure* might be enforced. At this critical moment a glimmer of light came to me. I was feeling like some helpless prisoner in an *oubliette*.

"You have noticed," I turned to the expert, "that these are old stones? There isn't a Cape stone amongst them."

The expert nodded.

"I repeat, gentlemen, that I have never seen these stones before; and in this case my reputation ought to protect me. Our firm is as well known in London as the firm of Riffany in New York. My passport establishes my identity, but if you care to phone up young Mr. Riffany, whom I know personally, he would, for the honour of our trade, come here at once. This *parure* is famous. It belonged to a great French family. A faithful servant brought it to England in 1791; it was sold to the Marquess of Powerstock of that day; it belonged a few weeks ago to the present marquess, a minor. His trustees instructed us to sell it, if possible without breaking it up. That case, as you see it, has been in our custody, on and off, for a hundred years. I can only assume, and I ask you to assume, that these diamonds were hidden where you found them by the head of the French family. He perished in the Terror—and nearly all the members of his family with him. The last living representative of that family established his claim, but it is certain that he knew nothing of these diamonds. There they were—and there they have remained till now. Might I ask why you examined the case so carefully? Did you have any information that a parcel of diamonds would be smuggled through in this way?"

They looked at each other.

"We do get information; we had none in this case. But there has been too much smuggling of diamonds lately. Some well-known firms in this country, Mr. Corwen, are not quite above suspicion. Anyway, for some time we have been more than usually alert when we were dealing with the trade. We examined that case because you are a big dealer in unset stones. You must understand that officially we neither believe nor

disbelieve your story. Your *parure* and these stones must remain for the present in our safe keeping. In five minutes I will tell you if you may go to your hotel."

He came back in a quarter of an hour. I found out afterwards that young Mr. Riffany had been called up on the telephone. What he said to them I don't know, but it sufficed. I was permitted to go to my hotel, and I made no doubt that I was under strictest surveillance.

V.

AT five that afternoon the Countess called at my hotel and drank tea in my sitting-room. She was all smiles when she came in.

"Figure to yourself, my friend, that my husband met me this morning and all is well. He has apologized for—for his indiscretion. He insists that I shall keep my *parure*. I am very happy. Congratulate me."

I allowed her to have her tea in peace, wondering what was passing in her mind. Outwardly she betrayed no sign of nervousness. She reminded me in a way so much of Mrs. Pengarvis that I recalled Charles Impey's methods with the Señora Miraflores. Incidentally, she asked me to dine with her and her husband. Did her husband know? If he didn't, what appeared to be a sincere *rapprochement* might come to a sudden end. Trying to read her, I was unable to determine whether she was happy as a wife or as a successful smuggler of diamonds.

She made a good tea, and then said, with a little laugh:—

"Now show me my *parure*. It is mine. I mean to wear it in Washington. My husband and I are returning to France in six weeks; so I shall get back my money, won't I? What did you have to pay? I will write you another cheque. My husband says that I must leave the *parure* with you till the cheque is cashed."

"The *parure*," I said slowly, "is in the possession of the Custom House officials. I have paid no duty. It may be confiscated."

"*Ciel!* Confiscated? Why?"

"Because they found in the case about twenty magnificent diamonds which I am accused of trying to smuggle into America."

"Oh, Mr. Corwen! How could you? And I thought you were being so nice and kind to me."

This was turning the tables with a vengeance. What cheek! What *aplomb!* I remained speechless under the spell of such effrontery. She continued swiftly:—

"But why should I lose my *parure*, which was paid for and declared, because you tried to smuggle in your own diamonds?"

"They weren't mine. I never saw them before."

"But, *mon Dieu*, they must belong to somebody, these diamonds. If they were found in my case, why surely they are mine?"

We stared at each other.

"*Aren't they yours?*"

"How absurd you are! So that is it, *hein?* You believe that I—I am the smuggler—or do you say smuggleress?"

She began to laugh. She said afterwards that my face would have made a cat laugh even if the poor animal knew that its hours were numbered. However, my face once more established my innocence. We were still talking when her husband was ushered in. I took rather a liking to him. But, at the moment, my brains were in the melting-pot. I still clung to the conviction that these two had conspired together to make me rake chestnuts out of the fire for them. And the chestnuts were in the fire. That alone was certain.

The Count was no fool. He listened attentively to what I and his wife said, smoking a cigarette out of a long amber holder.

"We must pull strings, Mr. Corwen. I know the French Ambassador. Do you know personally your English representative?"

I didn't.

"If you will excuse me, I'll get into communication with the two Embassies at once."

His manner was reassuring. Smuggler or not, he looked a gentleman. He appeared to be genuinely sorry for me, sorrier still for madame, and reasonably confident that the matter could be arranged.

They went off together after holding me to my engagement to dine with them. I was left alone with my thoughts. Finding them very poor company, I wandered downstairs into an immense lounge, wondering whether the New York Press would regard this astounding experience as "treasure trove" for them. Before I dressed for dinner I took a little walk, and I am quite sure that I was "shadowed." What would Rappington say? What would my Philadelphia associates do? On leaving the Customs I considered the expediency of ringing them up, but what could I tell them over a public telephone? It seemed better to mark time for a few hours.

My Countess, looking adorable in an evening frock, received me at eight. She told me at once that M. le Comte was on his way to Washington, but he had ordered dinner for us and engaged two seats at

"What have you to say?" asked the man who had found them.

"Only this," I gasped. "I had not the remotest idea that these diamonds were in my possession. They do not belong to me."

some revue. Madame held up an admonitory finger.

"We talk of everything except the *parure*."

"Amen to that."

"Alain is very penitent. He swears that he married me for love."

"Of course he did."

"*Polisson!* But, I ask you, did he leave me to make my heart grow fonder?"

"You have never told me why he did leave you, madame, or what he is doing over here."

"Ah-ha! Monsieur Paul is discretion itself. Alain is attached to the Embassy. Also he is, or was, attached to a young lady who lives in Washington. But these attachments are so detachable. She has detached herself. Why is that man over there staring at us?"

We were dining in the big restaurant. The man staring at us was the official who had found the diamonds. Mindful of my companion's admonition, I said carelessly:—

"He is staring at you, madame, and envying me."

Not bad for an old fellow who had started life as "sweeper-up" in our setting room. But inwardly I was bewildered by what she had just told me. In a sort of way it established her innocence. The *corps diplomatique* enjoy special privileges. Their baggage is not searched, they can bring into America what they please. It is understood that they take it out again. If Madame de Castel-Villebois had told me that her husband was attached to the French Embassy I could have told her that she could have marched through the Custom House wearing her *parure*, if she so pleased, and carrying the shagreen case in her hand.

We passed a most agreeable evening.

VI.

NEXT day a person of importance arranged to meet me at my hotel. I withhold his name, because he was acting semi-officially. These go-betweens are mysterious persons and singularly reticent. He told me curtly what I took to be an ultimatum.

"The shagreen case, Mr. Corwen, with everything that was in it, will be handed to you by the purser of the liner you go home in after the pilot has left you off Sandy Hook. If you will be good enough to let me know when you book your passage——"

"It is booked."

"Fine! If you will write on your card the date and the name of the vessel, I will attend to the rest. It is enough to say that your story has been accepted by the authorities, but it wouldn't look too credible in print. You have kept many persons very busy for twenty-four hours. Really you are under great obligations to the young Count de Castel-Villebois, who has been indefatigable in your service. You can do me one favour and gratify the curiosity of two gentlemen in high places."

"If it is in my power——"

"You may find out to whom these diamonds belong. If so, let me know."

He smiled grimly and left me.

I was free to go to Philadelphia, but I saw the Count and his Countess before I went. Monsieur said, rather stiffly:—

"I understand, Mr. Corwen, that you make no claim whatever to these loose diamonds?"

"None, M. le Comte."

"And the shagreen case, with its contents, was sold by Lord Powerstock's trustees to my wife?"

"That is so."

"Then these diamonds, unless it could be proved unquestionably that they belonged to Lord Powerstock's family, belong to her?"

"What luck if they do!" exclaimed madame.

I replied as stiffly as he:—

"I'm not a lawyer."

"One more question. That story you told to the officials—was it founded on fact?"

"It is a fact that the *parure* belonged to a great French family. I have forgotten the name—if I ever knew it—and it was sold by an *émigré* to the fourth Marquess of Powerstock."

"I see. On the strength of these rather flimsy facts you—I have no wish to be offensive—called upon your imagination. I congratulate you, Mr. Corwen, upon a notable effort. When you reach London you will, perhaps, ask Lord Powerstock's trustees if a number of loose diamonds disappeared unaccountably at any time in, say, the last hundred years?"

"I shall do so, M. le Comte."

"Thank you. Madame and I expect to be in London next September. Will you keep the *parure* till then?"

"With pleasure."

He bowed formally. Madame shook hands with me. They went away leaving me with a very nasty taste in my mouth.

The "affair" had been arranged. But the more I thought of it the less I liked it. The Count, obviously, disbelieved a story vamped up by me under the spur of the moment, a notable effort indeed, inspired to save, not myself, but his wife! Gilbertian, if I may say so.

Madame claimed the diamonds.

That bone of contention stuck in my

"I understand, Mr. Corwen, that you make no claim whatever to these loose diamonds?"
"None, M. le Comte."

throat. She was such a clever little woman, and she had admitted frankly that diamonds were her weakness. Why had she removed the *parure* from our custody and then returned it a week later? Had she confessed everything to her husband? Had he worked like a black to save her? To all these insistent questions I could find no answer.

VII.

WITHIN a month I was back in our establishment. It takes a good deal to astonish Rappington, but his face when I laid those twenty diamonds under his nose was something to write home about.

"So the Count suspected you, Corwen?"

"*Us*," I said, slyly.

"M'm! To whom do these magnificent stones belong?"

We saw the trustees—stiff and starched old gentlemen. I am not at all certain that their suspicions were not aroused, but they were keenly interested. Our great families keep records for ever and ever. The Powerstock solicitors delved deep into fusty papers. We did the same. No member of the family had bought diamonds from us that were not specified. Finally it was agreed that my story told to the New York officials might be the true story. We discovered, easily enough, the name of the *émigré*, the last Marquis de Montemart-Carnac, son of the man who sent the jewels to England and perished during the Terror. We instituted, at our own expense, discreet inquiries in Paris. We consulted a famous French genealogist. So far as he knew, the last of the Montemart-Carnacs had died in England without lawful issue.

Chill October was upon us when the Count and Countess came to me to claim the *parure*. The little Countess gave me two hands. The Count held out his hand.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Corwen. I—I didn't believe your story. It sounded too good to be true, but it *is* true."

"How do you know? How can you know?"

"Ah, well, the world is small. Last week, in Paris, I met your correspondent, the genealogist. You have spent a little money with him."

"Not *with* him, Monsieur le Comte—on him."

"Bah! I am not Monsieur le Comte to you. He asked me if I knew anything about your *émigré*, the last Marquis de Montemart-Carnac. I am not a religious man, Mr. Corwen, but is it merely coincidence that Hélène bought that *parure* here? That makes one think furiously, as we say. At any rate, it was plain to me that a man who had tried to smuggle diamonds into America and got caught would not waste money in trying to find the owner. And so—again I beg your pardon. To return to our *émigré*, who was a kinsman of my great-great-grandfather——"

Rank sentimentalist that I am, I jumped to the conclusion that the real owner of those lovely diamonds stood before me. He smiled at me, divining, possibly, my thoughts.

"Our *émigré*, who knew nothing of the hidden diamonds, never returned to France. He lived and died in England. He left no son, but one daughter. He married late in life an Englishwoman below him in rank. He died impoverished and was buried at Walton-on-Thames. His daughter, born in 1830, married in 1856 a Captain in some marching regiment. They had several children, but only two survived. They are two old maids, living together in comparative poverty in the small house which belonged to their grandfather. My mother remembered that the last Marquis de Montemart-Carnac died at Walton. We went to Walton the day before yesterday. If the diamonds belong to anybody they belong to these old ladies."

"You told them of the diamonds?"

"No. But my wife and I would like to be present when you tell them."

"We are quits," said I. "You suspected me, and I suspected you. All is well that ends well."

I HAVE come to the conclusion that this bewildering experience did end well. We three travelled down to Walton together. Two old ladies received us tremulously, unable at first to realize their good fortune. So far as the trustees of Lord Powerstock and we were concerned the sisters established their right to the diamonds, which, ultimately, were bought by us at a valuation. They could remember perfectly that their mother had spoken of a grievance affecting her father up to the day of his death. The *parure* was almost all that came to him from his father's estate, heavily mortgaged before the Terror. But he had expected to find other jewels unaccountably missing, notably a diamond necklace. But when I affirm that this experience ended well I am not thinking of the two spinsters. I said to my little Countess, when she entrusted the remodelling of the tiara to me:—

"Why did your husband work so hard to establish the innocence of a man he believed to be guilty?"

She laughed.

"To please me. You had been so kind. And I believed in your innocence. You see, dear friend, the *parure* brought Alain and me together. I bought it in a moment of mad extravagance. I realized that I had to go to America to sell half of it. You made me see that. If I had not bought it I should have remained over here, and he—he would have remained over there. Would you be shocked if I embraced you on both cheeks?"

She did it—there and then.

Fish Are Such Liars!

By

ROLAND PERTWEE

Illustrated by
J. H. THORPE

THERE had been a fuss in the pool beneath the alders and the small rainbow trout with a skitter of his tail flashed up stream, a hurt and angry fish. For three consecutive mornings he had taken the rise in that pool, and it injured his pride to be jostled from his drift just when the mayfly was coming up in numbers. If his opponent had been a half-pounder like himself he would have stayed and fought, but when an old hen fish, weighing fully three pounds, with a mouth like a rat-hole and a carnivorous, cannibalistic eye, rises from the reed beds and occupies, flight is the only effective argument.

But Rainbow was very much provoked. He had chosen his place with care. Now the mayfly was up, the little French chalk stream was full of rising fish, and he knew by experience that strangers are unpopular in that season. To do oneself justice during a hatch one must find a place where the fly drifts nicely overhead with the run of the stream, and natural drifts are scarce even in a chalk stream. He was not content to leap at the fly like an hysterical youngster who measured his weight in ounces and his wits in milligrammes. He had reached that time of life which demanded that he should feed off the surface by suction rather than exertion. No living thing is more particular about his table manners than a trout, and Rainbow was no exception.

" It's a sickening thing," he said to himself, " and a hard shame."

He added :—

" Get out of my way," to a couple of fat young chub with negroid mouths who were bubbling the surface in the silly, senseless fashion of their kind.

" Chub indeed ! "

But even the chub had a home and he had none—and the life of a homeless river-dweller is precarious.

" I will not and shall not be forced back to mid-stream," he said.

For save at eventide or in very special circumstances trout of personality do not frequent open water, where they must compete for every insect with the wind, the lightning-swift sweep of swallows and martins, and even the laborious pursuit of predatory dragon-flies with their bronze wings and bodies like rods of coloured glass. Even as he spoke he saw a three-ouncer leap at a dapping mayfly which was scooped out of his jaws by a passing swallow. Rainbow heard the tiny click as the mayfly's body cracked against the bird's beak. A single wing of yellowy gossamer floated downward and settled upon the water. Under the shelving banks to right and left, where the fly, discarding its nymph and still too damp for its virgin flight, drifted down stream, a dozen heavy trout were feeding thoughtfully and selectively.

" If only some angler would catch one of them, I might slip in and occupy the place before it gets known there's a vacancy."

But this uncharitable hope was not fulfilled, and with another whisk of his tail he propelled himself into the unknown waters up stream. A couple of strands of rusty barbed wire, relic of the war, spanned the shallows from bank to bank. Passing beneath them, he came to a narrow reach

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shaded by willows, to the first of which was nailed a board bearing the words "*Pêche Reservée.*" He had passed out of the communal into private water—water running languidly over manes of emerald weed between clumps of alder, willow herb, tall crimson sorrel, and masses of yellow iris. Ahead, like an apple-green rampart, rose the wooded heights of a forest, on either side were flat meadows of yellowing hay. Overhead the vast expanse of June blue sky was tufted with rambling clouds.

"My scales!" said Rainbow, "here's water!"

But it was vain to expect any of the best places in such a reach would be vacant, and to avoid a recurrence of his unhappy encounter earlier in the morning Rainbow continued his journey until he came to a spot where the river took one of those unaccountable right-angle bends which result in a pool—shallow on the one side but slanting into deeps on the other. Above it was a water break—a swirl, smoothing as it reached the pool into a sleek, swift run with an eddy which bore all the lighter floating things of the river over the calm surface of the little backwater, sheltered from above by a high shelving bank and a tangle of bramble and herb. Here in this backwater the twig, the broken reed, the leaf, the cork, the fly, floated in suspended activity for a few instants until drawn back by invisible magnetism to the main current.

Rainbow paused in admiration. At the tail of the pool two sound fish were rising with regularity, but in the backwater beyond the eddy the surface was still and unbroken. Watching open-eyed, Rainbow saw not one but a dozen mayflies, fat, juicy, and damp from the nymph, drift in, pause, and be carried away untouched. It was beyond the bounds of possibility that such a place could be vacant, but there was the evidence of his eyes to prove it, and, nothing if not a trier, Rainbow darted across the stream and parked himself six inches below the surface to wait events.

IT so happened that at the time of his arrival the hatch of fly was temporarily suspended, which gave Rainbow leisure to make a survey of his new abode. Beyond the eddy was a submerged snag—the branch of an apple tree borne there by heavy rains, water-logged, anchored, and intricate—an excellent place to break an angler's line. The river bank on his right was riddled under water with old rat-holes, than which there is no better sanctuary. Below him and to the left was a dense bed of weeds brushed flat by the flow of the stream.

"If it comes to the worst," said Rainbow, "a smart fish could do a get-away here with very little ingenuity, even from a cannibalistic old hen like—— Hullo!"

The exclamation was excited by the apparition of a gauzy shadow on the water, which is what a mayfly seen from below looks like. Resisting a vulgar inclination to leap at it with the violence of a youngster, Rainbow backed into the correct position which would allow the stream to present the morsel, so to speak, upon a tray.

Which it did—and scarcely a dimple on the surface to tell what had happened.

"Very nicely taken, if you will accept the praise of a complete stranger," said a low, soft voice, one inch behind his line of sight.

Without turning to see by whom he had been addressed, Rainbow flicked a yard up stream and came back with the current four feet away. In the spot he had occupied an instant before lay a great old trout of the most benign aspect, who could not have been less than four pounds in weight.

"I beg your pardon," said Rainbow, "but I had no idea that anyone—that is, I just dropped in *en passant* and, finding an empty house, I made so bold——"

"There is no occasion to apologize," said Old Trout, seductively. "I did not come up from the bottom as early to-day as is my usual habit at this season. Yesterday's hatch was singularly bountiful, and it is possible I did myself too liberally."

"Yes, but a gentleman of your weight and seniority can hardly fail to be offended at finding——"

"Not at all," Old Trout broke in. "I perceive you are a well-conducted fish who does not advertise his appetite in a loud and splashing fashion."

Overcome by the charm of Old Trout's manner and address, Rainbow reduced the distance separating them to a matter of inches.

"Then you do not want me to go?" he asked.

"On the contrary, dear young sir, stay by all means and take the rise. You are, I perceive, of the rainbow or, as they say here in France, of the *arc-en-ciel* family. As a youngster I had the impression that I should turn out a rainbow, but events prove it was no more than the bloom, the natural sheen of youth."

"To speak the truth, sir," said Rainbow, "unless you had told me to the contrary I would surely have thought you one of us."

Old Trout shook his tail.

"You are wrong," he said. "I am from Dulverton, an English trout farm on the Exe, of which you will have heard. You are doubtless surprised to find an English fish in French waters."

"I am indeed," Rainbow replied, sucking

in a passing mayfly with such excellent good manners that it was hard to believe he was feeding. " Then you, sir," he added, " must know all about the habits of men."

" I may justly admit that I do," Old Trout agreed. " Apart from being hand-reared, I have in my twelve years of life studied the species in moods of activity, passivity, duplicity, and violence."

Rainbow remarked that such must doubtless have proved of invaluable service. It did not, however, explain the mystery of his presence on a French river.

" For, sir," he added, " Dulverton, as once I heard when enjoying ' A Chat about Rivers,' delivered by a much-travelled sea trout, is situated in the West of England, and without crossing the Channel I am unable to explain how you arrived here. Had you belonged to the salmon family—with which, sir, it is evident you have no connection—the explanation would be simple, but in the circumstances it baffles my understanding."

Old Trout waved one of his fins airily.

" Yet cross the Channel I certainly did," said he, " and at a period in history which I venture to state will not readily be forgotten. It was during the war, my dear young friend, and I was brought in a can, in company with a hundred yearlings, to this river—or, rather, the upper reaches of this river—by a young officer who wished to further an *entente* between English and French fish even as the war was doing with the mankind of these two nations."

Old Trout sighed a couple of bubbles and arched his body this way and that.

" There was a gentleman and a sportsman," he said. " A man who was acquainted with our people as I dare to say very few are acquainted. Had it ever been my lot to fall victim to a lover of the rod, I could have done so without regret to his. If you will take a look at my tail, you will observe that the letter ' W ' is perforated on the upper side. He presented me with this distinguishing mark before committing me, with his blessing, to the water."

" I have seldom seen a tail more becomingly decorated," said Rainbow. " But what happened to your benefactor ? "

Old Trout's expression became infinitely sad.

" If I could answer that," said he, " I were indeed a happy trout. For many weeks after he put me into the river I used to watch him, in what little spare time he was able to obtain, casting a dry fly with the exquisite precision and likeness to nature in all the likely pools and runs and eddies near his battery position. Oh, minnows ! It was a pleasure to watch that man, even as it was his pleasure to watch us. His bravery, too ! I call to mind a dozen times when he fished unmoved and unstartled while bullets from machine-guns were pecking at the water like herons and thudding into the mud banks upon which he stood."

" An angler ! " remarked Rainbow. " It would be no lie to say I like him the less on that account."

Old Trout became unexpectedly stern.

" Why so ? " he retorted, severely. " Have I not said he was also a gentleman and a sportsman ? My officer was neither a pot-hunter nor a beast of prey. He was a purist—a man who took delight in pitting his knowledge of nature against the subtlest and most suspicious intellectual forces of the wild. Are you so young as not yet to have learned the exquisite enjoyment of escaping disaster and avoiding error by the exercise of personal ingenuity ? Pray do not reply, for I would hate to think so hard a thing of any trout. We as a race exist by virtue of our brilliant intellectuality and hypersensitive selectivity. In waters where there are no pike and only an occasional otter, but for the machinations of men where should we turn to school our wits ? Danger is our mainstay, for I tell you, Rainbow, that trout are composed of two senses—appetite, which makes of us fools, and suspicion, which teaches us to be wise."

Greatly chastened, not alone by what Old Trout had said but by the forensic quality of his speech, Rainbow rose short and put a promising mayfly on to the wing.

" I am glad to observe," said Old Trout, " that you are not without conscience."

" To tell the truth, sir," Rainbow replied, apologetically, " my nerve this morning has been rudely shaken, but for which I would not have shown such want of good sportsmanship."

AND with becoming brevity he told the tale of his eviction from the pool down stream. Old Trout listened gravely, only once moving, and that to absorb a small blue dun, an insect which he keenly relished.

" A regrettable affair," he admitted ; " but, as I have often observed, women, who are the gentlest creatures under water in adversity, are a thought lacking in moderation in times of abundance. They are apt to snatch."

" But for a turn of speed, she would certainly have snatched me," said Rainbow.

" Very shocking," said Old Trout. " Cannibals are disgusting. They destroy the social amenities of the river. We fish have but little family life, and should therefore aim to cultivate a freemasonry of good-fellowship among ourselves. For my part,

I am happy to line up with other well-conducted trout and content myself with what happens along my own particular drift. Pardon me," he added, breasting Rainbow to one side. "I invited you to take the rise of mayfly, but I must ask you to leave the duns alone." Then, fearing this remark might be construed to reflect adversely upon his hospitality, he proceeded: "I have a reason which I will explain later. For the moment we are discussing the circumstances that led to my presence in this river."

"To be sure—your officer. He never succeeded in deluding you with his skill?"

"That would have been impossible," said Old Trout, "for I had taken up a position under the far bank where he could only have reached me with a fly by wading in a part of the river which was in view of a German sniper."

"Wily!" Rainbow chuckled. "Cunning work, sir."

"Perhaps," Old Trout admitted; "although I have since reproached myself with cowardice. However, I was at the time a very small fish, and a certain amount of nervousness is forgivable in the young."

At this gracious acknowledgment the rose-coloured hue in Rainbow's rainbow increased noticeably—in short, he blushed.

"From where I lay," Old Trout went on, "I was able to observe the manœuvres of my officer and greatly profit thereby."

"But excuse me, sir," said Rainbow. "I have heard it said that an angler of the first class is invisible from the river."

"He is invisible by the fish he is trying to catch," Old Trout admitted, "but it must be obvious that he is not invisible to the fish who lie beside or below him. I would also remind you that during the war every tree, every scrap of vegetation, and every vestige of natural cover had been torn up, trampled down, razed. The river banks were as smooth as the top of your head. Even the buttercup—that very humorous flower that tangles up the back cast of so many industrious anglers—was absent. Those who fished on the Western front had little help from nature."

Young Rainbow sighed, for only a few days before his tongue had been badly scratched by an artificial alder which had every appearance of reality.

"IT would seem," Young Rainbow said, "that this war had its merits."

"My young friend," said Old Trout, "you never made a greater mistake. A desire on the part of our soldiery to vary a monotonous diet of bully beef and biscuit often drove them to resort to villainous methods of assault against our kind."

"Nets?" gasped Rainbow in horror.

"Worse than nets—bombs," Old Trout replied. "A small oval black thing called a Mills bomb, which the shameless fellows flung into deep pools."

"But surely the chances of being hit by such a——"

"You reveal a pathetic ignorance," said Old Trout. "There is no question of being hit. The wretched machine exploded under water and burst our people's insides or stunned us so that we floated dead to the surface. I well remember my officer coming upon such a group of marauders one evening—yes, and laying about him with his fists in defiance of King's Regulations and the Manual of Military Law. Two of them he seized by the collar and the pants and flung them into the river. Spinning minnows, that was a sight worth seeing! 'You low swine,' I heard him say, 'you trash, you muck. Isn't there enough carnage without this sort of thing?' Afterwards he sat on the bank with the two dripping men and talked to them for their souls' sake. 'Look ahead, boys. Ask yourselves—what are we fighting for? Decent homes to live in at peace with each other, fields to till, and forests and rivers to give us a day's sport and fun. It's our rotten job to massacre each other, but, by gosh, don't let's massacre the harmless rest of nature as well. At least, let's give 'em a running chance. Boys, in the years ahead, when all the mess is cleared up, I look forward to coming back to this old spot, when there is alder growing by the banks and willow herb and tall reeds and the drone of insects instead of the rumble of those guns. I don't want to come back to a dead river that I helped to kill, but to a river ringed with rising fish, some of whom were old comrades of the war.' He went on to tell of we hundred Dulverton trout that he had marked with the letter 'W. 'Give 'em their chance,' he said, 'and in the years to come those beggars will reward us a hundred times over. They'll give us a finer thrill and put up a cleaner fight than old Jerry ever contrived.' Those were emotional times, and, though you may be reluctant to believe me, one of those two very wet 'men dripped water from his eyes as well as his clothing. "Many's the 'appy afternoon I've 'ad with a roach pole on Brentford Canal,' he sniffed, 'though I've never yet tried m' hand against a trout.' 'You shall do it now,' said my officer, and during the half-hour that was left of daylight that dripping soldier had his first lesson in the most delicate art in the world. I can see them now—the clumsy, wet fellow and my officer timing him, timing him—'One and—two and—one and—two and.' The action of my officer's

Rainbow flicked a yard up stream and came back with the current four feet away. In the spot he had occupied an instant before lay a great old trout of the most benign aspect.

wrist with its persuasive flick was the prettiest thing I have ever seen."

"Did he carry out his intention and come back after the war?" Rainbow asked.

"I shall never know," Old Trout replied. "I do not even know if he survived it. There was a great battle—a German drive. For hours they shelled the river front, and many falling short exploded in our midst with terrible results. My own bank was torn to shreds and our people suffered. How they suffered! About noon the infantry came over, hordes in field grey. There were pontoons, rope bridges, and hand-to-hand fights on both banks and even in the stream itself."

"And your officer?"

"I saw him once, before the water was stamped dense into liquid mud and dyed by the blood of men. He was in the thick of it, unarmed, and a German officer called on him to surrender. For answer he struck him in the face with a light cane. Ah! that wrist action. Then a shell burst, smothering the water with clods of fallen earth—and other things."

"Then you never knew?"

"I never knew, although that night I searched among the dead. Next day I went down stream—for the water in that place was polluted with death. The bottom of the pool, in which I had my place, was choked with strange and mangled tenants that were not good to look upon. We trout are a clean people that will not readily abide in dirty houses. I am a Dulverton trout, where the water is filtered by the hills and runs cool over stones."

"And you have stayed here ever since?" Old Trout shrugged a fin.

"I have moved with the times—choosing a place according to the needs of my weight."

"And you have never been caught, sir, by any other angler?"

"Am I not here?" Old Trout answered with dignity.

"Oh, quite, sir. I had only thought, perhaps, as a younger fish enthusiasm might have resulted to your disadvantage, but that, nevertheless, you had been returned."

"Returned! returned!" Old Trout echoed. "Returned to the frying-pan! Where on earth did you pick up that expression? We are in France, my young friend, we are not on the Test, the Itchen, or the Kennet. In this country it is not the practice of anglers to return anything—however miserable in size."

"But nowadays," Rainbow protested, "there are Englishmen and Americans on the river who show us more consideration."

"They may show *you* consideration," said Old Trout, "but I am of an importance that neither asks for nor expects it. Oblige me by being a little more discreet with your plurals. In the impossible event of my being deceived and caught I should be introduced to a glass case with an appropriate background of rocks and reeds."

"But, sir, with respect, how can you be so confident of your unassailability?" Rainbow demanded, edging into position to accept an attractive mayfly with yellow wings that was drifting down stream towards him.

"How?" Old Trout responded. "Because——" then suddenly—"Leave it, you fool."

Rainbow had just broken the surface when the warning came. The yellow-winged mayfly was wrenched off the water with a wet squeak. A tangle of limp cast lapped itself round the upper branches of a willow far up stream and a raw voice exclaimed something venomous in French.

By common consent the two fish went down.

"Well, really!" expostulated Old Trout. "I hoped you were above that kind of thing. Nearly to fall victim to a *down stream* angler. It's a little too much! And think of the effect it will have on my prestige. Why, that incompetent fool will go about boasting that he rose me. *Me!*"

FOR some minutes Rainbow was too crestfallen even to apologize. At last:—

"I am afraid," he said, "I was paying more heed to what you were saying than to my own conduct. I never expected to be fished from above. The fly was an uncommonly good imitation, and it is a rare thing for a Frenchman to use 4X gut."

"Rubbish," said Old Trout, testily. "These are mere half-pound arguments. 4X gut, when associated with a fourteen-stone shadow, should deceive nothing over two ounces. I saved your life, but it is all very provoking. If that is a sample of your general demeanour it is improbable that you will ever reach a pound."

"At this season we are apt to be careless," Rainbow wailed. "And nowadays it is so hard, sir, to distinguish the artificial fly from the real."

"No one expects you to do so," was the answer, "but common prudence demands that you should pay some attention to the manner in which it is presented. A mayfly does not hit the water with a splash, neither is it able to sustain itself in mid-stream against the current. Have you ever seen a natural insect leave a broadening wake of cut water behind its tail? Never mind the fly, my dear boy, but watch the manner of its presentation. Failure to do that has cost many of our people their lives."

" You speak, sir," said Rainbow, a shade sulkily, " as though it were a disgrace for a trout ever to suffer defeat at the hands of an angler."

" Which indeed it is, save in exceptional circumstances," Old Trout answered. " I do not say that a perfect up stream cast from a well-concealed angler, when the fly alights dry and cocked and dances at even speed with the current, may not deceive us to our fall. And I would be the last to say that a *grignon*, or, as we call them on my side of the Channel, a grasshopper, skilfully dapped on the surface through the branches of an overhanging tree will not inevitably bring about our destruction. But I do most emphatically say that in such a spot as this, where the slightest defect in presentation is multiplied a hundredfold by the varying water speeds, that a careless rise is unpardonable. There is only one spot, and that a matter of twelve yards down stream, from which a fly can be drifted over me with any semblance to nature. Even so, there is not one angler in a thousand who can make that cast with success by reason of a willow which cramps the back cast and the manner in which these alders on our left sprawl across the pool."

Rainbow did not turn about to verify these statements because it is bad form for a trout to face down stream. He contented himself by replying with a touch of acerbity :

" I should have thought, sir, with the feelings you expressed regarding sportsmanship, you would have found such a sanctuary too dull for your entertainment."

" Every remark you make serves to aggravate the impression of your ignorance," Old Trout replied. " Would you expect a trout of my intelligence to put myself in some place where I am exposed to the vulgar assaults of every amateur upon the bank ? Of the green boy who lashes the water into foam—of the purblind peasant who slings his fly at me with a clod of earth or a tail of weed attached to the hook ? In this place I invite attention from none but the best people—the expert—the purist."

" I understood you to say that there were none such in these parts," grumbled Rainbow.

" There are none who have succeeded in deceiving me," was the answer. " As a fact, for the last few days I have been vastly entranced by an angler who, by any standard, is deserving of praise. His presentation is flawless, and the only fault I can detect in him is a tendency to overlook piscine psychology. He will be with us in a few minutes, since he knows it is my habit to lunch at noon."

" Pardon the interruption," said Rainbow, " but there is a gallant hatch of fly going down. I can hear your two neighbours at the tail of the pool rising steadily."

Old Trout assumed an indulgent air.

" We will go up if you wish," said he, " but you will be well advised to observe my counsel before taking the rise, because if my angler keeps his appointment you will most assuredly be *meuniered* before nightfall."

At this unpleasant prophecy Rainbow shivered.

" Let us keep to weed," he suggested.

But Old Trout only laughed, so that bubbles from the river bed rose and burst upon the surface.

" Courage," said he ; " it will be an opportunity for you to learn the finer points of the game. If you are nervous, lie nearer to the bank. The natural fly does not drift there so abundantly, but you will be secure from the artificial. Presently I will treat you to an exhibition of playing with death you will not fail to appreciate." He broke off and pointed with his eyes. " Over you and to the left."

Rainbow made a neat double rise and drifted back into line.

" VERY mellow," he said, " very mellow and choice. Never tasted better. May I ask, sir, what you meant by piscine psychology ? "

" I imply that my angler does not appreciate the subtle possibilities of our intellect. Now my officer concerned himself as vitally with what we were thinking as with what we were feeding upon. This fellow, secure in the knowledge that his presentation is well-nigh perfect, is content to offer me the same variety of flies day after day, irrespective of the fact that I have learnt them all by heart. I have, however, adopted the practice of rising every now and then to encourage him."

" Rising ? At an artificial fly ? I never heard such temerity in all my life," gasped Rainbow.

Old Trout moved his body luxuriously.

" I should have said—appearing to rise," he amended. " You may have noticed that I have exhibited a predilection for small duns in preference to the larger *ephemeridæ*. My procedure is as follows. I wait until a natural dun and his artificial mayfly are drifting down stream with the smallest possible distance separating them. Then I rise and take the dun. Assuming I have risen to him he strikes, misses, and is at once greatly flattered and greatly provoked. By this device I sometimes occupy his attention for over an hour, and thus render a substantial service to others of my kind who would certainly have fallen victim to his skill."

Fish Are Such Liars!

"The river is greatly in your debt, sir," said Young Rainbow, with deliberate satire.

He knew by experience that fish, as well as anglers, are notorious liars, but the exploit his host had recounted was a trifle too strong. Taking a sidelong glance, he was surprised to see that Old Trout did not appear to have appreciated the subtle ridicule of his remark. The long, lithe body had become almost rigid and the great round eyes were focused upon the surface with an expression of fixed concentration.

Looking up Rainbow saw a small white-winged mayfly with red legs and a body the colour of straw swing out from the main stream and describe a slow circle over the calm surface above Old Trout's head. Scarcely an inch away a tiny blue dun, its wings folded as closely as the pages of a book, floated attendant. An upward rush, a sucking kerr-rop, and when the broken water had calmed the dun had disappeared and the mayfly was dancing away down stream.

"Well," said Old Trout, "how's that, my youthful sceptic? Pretty work, eh?"

"I saw nothing in it," was the impertinent reply. "There is not a trout on the river who could not have done likewise."

"Even when one of those two flies was artificial?" Old Trout queried, tolerantly.

"But neither of them was artificial," Rainbow retorted. "Had it been so the angler would have struck. They always do."

"Of course he struck," Old Trout replied.

"But he didn't," Rainbow protested. "I saw the mayfly go down with the current."

"My poor fish!" Old Trout replied. "Do you presume to suggest that I am unable to distinguish an artificial from a natural fly? Are you so blind that you failed to see the prismatic colours in the water from the paraffin in which the fly had been dipped? Here you are; here it is again!"

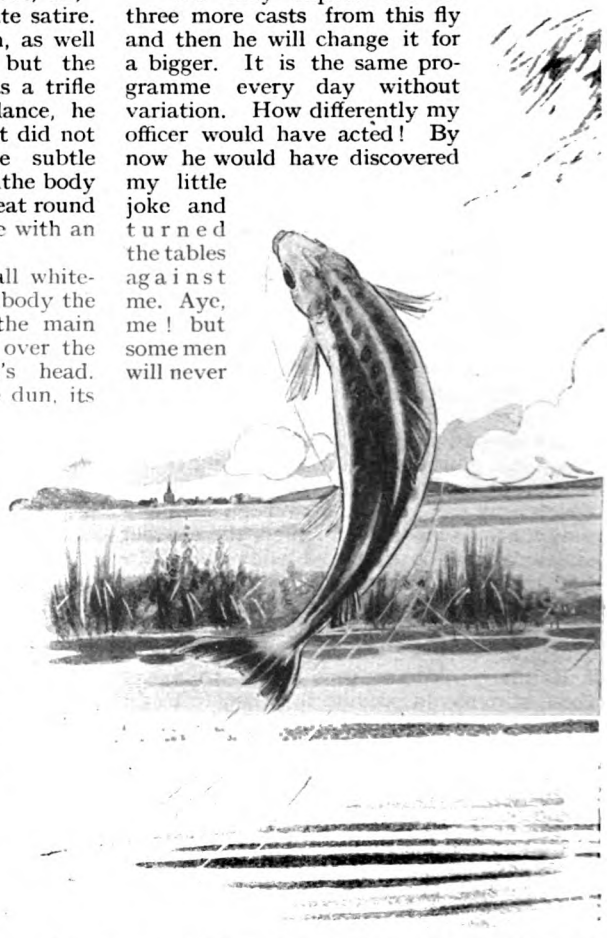
Once more the white-winged insect drifted across the backwater, but this time there was no attendant dun.

"If that's a fake I'll eat my tail," said Rainbow.

"If you question my judgment," Old Trout answered, "you are at liberty to rise. I dare say, in spite of a shortage of brain, that you would eat comparatively well."

But Rainbow, in common with his kind, was not disposed to take chances.

"We may expect two or three more casts from this fly and then he will change it for a bigger. It is the same programme every day without variation. How differently my officer would have acted! By now he would have discovered my little joke and turned the tables against me. Aye, me! but some men will never learn. Your mental outfit, dear Rainbow, is singularly like a man's," he added. "It lacks elasticity."



It was an aerial rush three feet out of the water tail designed to break the cast. But his adversary, the point of the rod

Rainbow made no retort and was glad of his forbearance, for every word Old Trout had spoken was borne out by subsequent events. Four times the white-winged mayfly described an arc over the backwater, but in the absence of duns Old Trout did not rise again. Then came a pause, during which, through a lull in the hatch, even the natural insect was absent from the river.

"He is changing his fly," said Old Trout, "but he will not float it until the hatch starts again. He is casting beautifully this morning, and I hope circumstances will permit me to give him another rise."

"But suppose," said Rainbow, breathlessly,

with a twist at its apex and a cutting lash of the at the first hint of what was happening, dropped flush with the surface.

" you played this game once too often and were foul-hooked as a result ? "

Old Trout expanded his gills broadly.

" Why, then," he replied, " I should break him. Once round a limb of that submerged apple bough and the thing would be done. I should never allow myself to be caught, and no angler could gather up the slack and haul me into mid-stream in time to prevent me from reaching the bough. Stand by."

The shadow of a large, dark mayfly floated cockily over the backwater, and had almost returned to the main stream when a small iron-blue dun settled like a puff of thistle-down in its wake.

The two insects were a foot nearer the fast water than the spot where Old Trout was accustomed to take the rise. But for the presence of a spectator it is doubtful whether he would have done so, but Young Rainbow's want of appreciation had excited his vanity, and with a rolling swoop he swallowed the dun and bore it downwards.

AND then an amazingthing happened. Instead of drifting back to his place as was expected, Old Trout's head was jerked sideways by an invisible force. A thin translucent thread upcut the water's surface and tightened irresistibly. A second later Old Trout was fighting, fighting, fighting to reach the submerged apple bough with the full weight of the running water and the full strength of the finest Japanese gut strained against him.

Watching, wide-eyed and aghast, from one of the underwater rat-holes into which he had hastily withdrawn, Rainbow saw the figure of a man rise out of a bed of irises down stream and scramble up on the bank. In his right hand, with the wrist well back, he held a light split cane rod, whose upper joint was curved to a half circle. The man's left hand was detaching a collapsible landing net from the ring of his belt. Every attitude and movement was expressive of perfectly-organized activity. His mouth was shut as tightly as a steel trap, but a light of happy excitement danced in his eyes.

" No, you don't, my fellar," Rainbow heard him say. " No, you don't. I knew all about that apple bough before ever I put a fly over your pool. *And* the weed bed on the right," he added, as Old Trout made a sudden swerve half down and half across stream.

Tucking the net under his arm the man whipped up the slack with a lightning-like action. The manœuvre cost Old Trout dear, for when, despairing of reaching the

weed and burrowing into it, he tried to regain his old position, he found himself six feet farther away from the apple bough.

Instinctively Old Trout knew it was useless to dash down stream, for a man who could take up slack with the speed his adversary had shown would profit by the expedient to come more quickly to terms with him. Besides, lower down there was broken water to knock the breath out of his lungs. Even where he lay straining and slugging this way and that, the water was pouring so fast into his open mouth as nearly to drown him. His only chance of effecting a smash was by a series of jumps, followed by quick dives. Once before, although he had not confessed it to Rainbow, Old Trout had saved his life by resorting to this expedient. It takes the strain off the line and returns it so quickly that even the finest gut is apt to sunder.

Meanwhile the man was slowly approaching, winding up as he came. Old Trout, boring in the depths, could hear the click of the check reel with increasing distinctness. Looking up, he saw that the cast was almost vertical above his head, which meant that the moment to make the attempt was at hand. The tension was appalling, for ever since the fight began his adversary had given him the butt unremittingly. Aware of his own weight and power, Old Trout was amazed that any tackle could stand the strain.

"Now's my time," he thought, and jumped.

It was no ordinary jump, but an aerial rush three feet out of the water with a twist at its apex and a cutting lash of the tail designed to break the cast. But his adversary was no ordinary angler, and at the first hint of what was happening he dropped the point of the rod flush with the surface.

Once and once more Old Trout flung himself into the air, but after each attempt he found himself with diminishing strength and with less line to play with.

"It looks to me," said Rainbow, mournfully, "as if my unhappy host will lose this battle and finish up in that glass case to which he was referring a few minutes ago." And, greatly affected, he burrowed his nose in the mud and wondered, in the event of this dismal prophecy coming true, whether he would be able to take possession of the pool without molestation.

In consequence of these reflections he failed to witness the last phase of the battle, when, as will sometimes happen with big fish, all the fight went out of Old Trout and, rolling wearily over and over, he abandoned himself to the clinging embraces of the net. He never saw the big man proudly carry Old Trout back into the hayfield, where, before proceeding to remove the fly, he sat down beside a shallow dyke and lit a cigarette and smiled largely. Then, with an affectionate and professional touch, he picked up Old Trout by the back of the neck, his forefinger and thumb sunk firmly in the gills.

"You're a fine fellar," he said, extracting the fly, "a good sportsman, and a funny fish. You fooled me properly for three days, but I think you'll own I outwitted you in the end."

Rummaging in his creel for a small rod of hard wood that he carried for the purpose of administering the quietus, he became aware of something that arrested the action.

Leaning forward, he stared with open eyes at a tiny "W" perforated in the upper part of Old Trout's tail.

"Shades of the war! Dulverton!" he exclaimed. Then, with a sudden warmth: "Old chap! old chap! Is it really you? This is red-letter stuff. If you're not too far gone to take another lease of life, have it with me."

And with the tenderness of a woman he slipped Old Trout into the dyke and in a tremble of excitement hurried off to the *auberge* where the fishermen lodged, to tell a tale no one even pretended to believe.

FOR the best part of an hour Old Trout lay in the shallow waters of the dyke before slowly cruising back to his own place beneath the overhanging bank. The alarming experience through which he had passed had made him a shade forgetful, and he was not prepared for the sight of Young Rainbow rising steadily at the hatch of fly.

"Pardon me! But a little more to your right," he said, with heavy courtesy.

"Diving otters!" cried Young Rainbow, leaping a foot clear of the water. "You, sir—*YOU!*"

"And why not?" Old Trout replied. "Your memory must be short if you have already forgotten that this is my place."

"Yes, but——" Rainbow began.

"You are referring to that little circus of a few minutes ago," said Old Trout. "Is it possible you failed to appreciate the significance of the affair? I knew at once it was my dear officer when he dropped the artificial dun behind the natural mayfly. In the circumstances I could hardly do less than accept his invitation. Nothing is more delightful than a reunion of comrades of the war." He paused and added: "We had a charming talk, he and I, and I do not know which of us was the more affected. It is a tragedy that such friendship and such intellect as we share cannot exist in a common element."

And so great was his emotion that Old Trout dived and buried his head in the weeds.

Whereby Rainbow did uncommonly well during the midday hatch.

SYBIL THORNDIKE – By Her Brother

THE ROMANTIC LIFE-STORY OF OUR GREATEST ACTRESS

By

RUSSELL THORNDIKE

This first instalment, a most vivid and delightful story of child-life, shows how the instinct for the stage was present, even in her nursery days, in the very spirit of the great Artiste who was destined in the course of time to thrill the world in such a part as that of "St. Joan."

I.—CHILDHOOD.

TO play Boswell to Sybil Thorndike's Johnson is a task before which a mere brother might well tremble. And I do. But I also realize that if you wish to know people well, it is quite a good scheme to be brought up together in the same nursery. Hence my claim in now attempting the *rôle* of Boswell—the nursery. We develop. We do not change. Even the shedding of our skins each seven years makes precious little difference if our characters are clear-cut from the word "Go," as Sybil's was; for as the doctor bent over the natal bed this new-comer extended one hand to him in true leading lady manner, as much as to say: "Thank you for working up my entrance," and then gave him a push to convey that she was quite ready to play her part on the great stage of the world without any further support from him. For this description I am indebted to my mother, so I know it is true.

Age eighteen months.

Nimble Dick, the exuberant hero of a popular song of the 'sixties, was but a slight exaggeration of Sybil, for if she didn't "learn to walk in a couple of months," like that volatile baby, it was only because the maternity nurse put her own foot down and forbade her charge to do ditto. Sybil's amazing vitality astonishes everyone today. Well, she had it from the start. Like the young Samson, as she grew the spirit moved in her, and upon my soul it has never stopped moving. Its crescendo is like a Bach fugue, her many minor themes, such as home, music, and literature, in all of which she is something of an expert, working in and out through a thundering maelstrom and culminating in her major theme, the grandioso of the theatre. In contemplating Sybil's daily work one has to put, metaphorically, a wet towel round one's head and cotton-wool in one's ears, for it is disturbing to face a Niagara. But really this energetic sister of mine is little different from the stormy petrel I met in the nursery. No doubt one is unsophisticated in high-chair days, but I have never lost the thrill of

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Sybil's tragic performance of Abraham on the nursery table.

Draped in bath-towels, she tied me with a skipping-rope on to an inverted clothes-basket for an altar, where she offered me for a burnt-offering to the Lord, plunging a paper knife into my innocent heart. Yes. She killed Isaac, partly because I had to double the Ram, which I did by holding two penny bugles to my head, and partly because she didn't agree with happy endings. It also gave her a great chance of tragedy when the Ram said: "Abraham. Now you see. This comes of being hasty. God was only fooling. Why couldn't you wait a minute before doing anything so very decided?" At which Abraham's grief was immense, and Sybil's great speech started: "Why? Why? Why? Why? You ask me why, you mutton-headed Ram? How dare you be so 'quisitive? Don't you know that little Rams should be seen and not heard?"

Sybil loved that speech, and got very angry if the servants laughed. We always inflicted our plays on the servants.

A DETERMINED YOUNG LADY.

SYBIL THORNDIKE came from sturdy, eccentric grandfathers: paternally, a General who never saw action but never retired; maternally, a great authority on ships, who only went a-voyaging once, but whose name, John Bowers, was a household word to men in foreign ports. One of John Bowers's daughters, christened Macdonald, in honour of a relative, was Sybil's mother, and it was due to her inheriting her father's gift of knowing what she wanted and going straight out to get it that Sybil owed her existence.

Miss Donald was a good match for any of the young officers connected with her father's line of ships, and many of them paid court to her. Just when "Donnie" was worrying as to which she ought to take, or if she ought to take any at all, she accepted an invitation to Bristol. There, at a big service to be held at St. Mary's, Redcliffe, her favourite brother, Jack, was "billed" to preach his first important sermon. Eagerly she scanned the great procession as the choir appeared for a sight of her important brother—but, alas! the favourite was walking with another young curate who completely eclipsed all sisterly thoughts in the breast of Miss Donald.

"Who is that gloriously handsome young man?" she whispered to her brother's wife, who sat with her.

"Which one?"

"I'll nudge you when he passes. There! Walking with Jack."

"Young Thorndike. Was with Jack at Cambridge. Son of a General. Why?"

"Nothing," answered Donnie, but added to herself: "Good! That removes difficulty number one. Jack can introduce us, and then if I can't make him propose I'm not father's daughter; and if I'm not, I'll never marry anyone else."

A week or so later a smart wedding drove up the avenue from Trinity Church. There were postilions in scarlet, as was then the fashion, and inside the carriage sat Arthur Thorndike and Donald his bride. A year later, up at Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, was Sybil born.

MEMORIES OF GAINSBOROUGH.

SYBIL spent her first year and a half of life in Gainsborough, and only two facts stand out in that otherwise amazing memory. One is a joy she never lost and the other a grief that time has healed. The joy was being allowed to toddle from somebody's garden into a field of new-mown hay. Whenever she smells hay now she cries out: "Oh, Gainsborough!" So much for the joy, which is a good one, for, as Bottom the Weaver says, "Good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow." The grief was the decease of her first wax doll. She stood it up against the fire-guard, and when she next looked at it, its face had slithered down its dress on to the rug. That's all. Nothing else of Gainsborough can I get out of her. Her earliest recollections are, like mine, bound up in Rochester, where our father had come when she was a year and a half old, to take up his appointment as minor canon under Dean Scott—of Liddell and Scott Lexicon fame.

In clerical nurseries, the Archdeacon, the Dean, the Bishop, and, on rare occasions, the Archbishop stand for a lot. They are the parents' masters, and it is quite possible for them to "prefer" the whole family to a country vicarage, with stables, barns, fields, a pony, chickens, a cow, and all those other luxuries that the children of country vicars enjoy—things denied to the mere kids of minor canons. Little Sybil sensed the importance of the masters as soon as she could reason, and never failed to curtsy when she saw gaiters, though it took her some time to differentiate between clerical gaiters and those worn by the milkman, a dashing young Jehu who once gave us a ride in his chariot because he loved our cook, and to whom, because of his gaiters, Sybil accorded full clerical honours by genuflexion.

Under Sybil's sisterly tutorage I early learned the respect due to gaiters. Sybil explained to me later, when my brain was capable of a little understanding, that even dignitaries of the Church were human and

The match went out, but its little life had been long enough to light up the white face of Charles Dickens—*on our mantelpiece.*

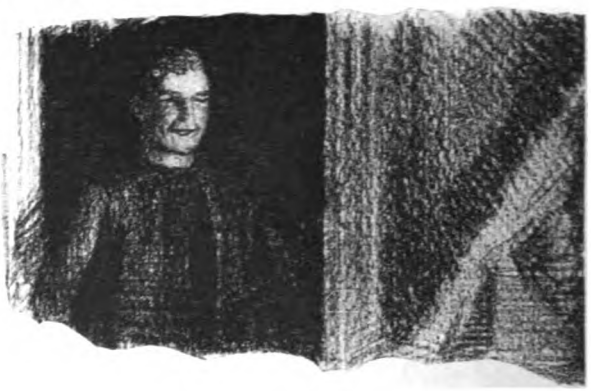
wobbly stage, but we succeeded in giving some good bloodthirsty shows on it.

"THE DENTIST'S CURE."

FOR one of our best plays Sybil got a brain-wave with the spare-room bed. She rigged up an apron-stage on the floor, so that we could have our big set ready while the front scene was in progress. For this innovation she wrote a melodrama, a careful script which took her days to prepare. My only fear was that she might lose interest before she completed it, because Sybil always likes to do a thing at once and get on to something else; for there's no repose about her, except when she's acting it, and precious little then, if there's an excuse to biff and bang. She didn't lose interest in this case, though perhaps it would have been better for the audience if she had. However, the servants liked it, and it was a great success with us. We adored it. It was entitled "The Dentist's Cure; or, Saw Their Silly Heads Off"—a deliberate piece of piracy from "Sweeny Todd," our cook's favourite play, and from Sequa the Doctor.

It was Sybil's first sinister part. She made ner appearance on the apron-stage. She was disguised as an old lady, a kind old lady who stopped children and offered them sweets. I say "disguised," because the audience tumbled to it at once that she was bad to the core. Trust Sybil for that. She could act, even in those days. The children, by the way, were carefully-prepared puppets made of board, with crude faces painted on them, and two rows of tin-tacks for teeth. Now Sybil's sweets had the power of giving the child-victim immediate and agonizing toothache. As the "board-children" couldn't speak, I sucked imaginary sweets and howled in imaginary pain from behind the curtain whenever Sybil coughed. In an interval of howling from me, Sybil made an exit, did a quick change, and re-entered, re-disguised as a hospital nurse who sympathized with the suffering children and offered to lead them to "kind Mr. Fang the dentist who is so gentle." Off-stage I then had to imitate a parent calling one of the board-children home to dinner. Sybil came to the wings with the child in her arms and said: "Is this your little pet? It has got dweadful toothache. I am taking the darling to dear Mr. Fang." (I should say here that in this part of the *rôle* Sybil sounded her R's like W's to help disguise.) "And I pwomise you that Mr. Fang will tempowawily stop, cwown, and extwact the twoublesome woot. Don't thank me. It's a tweat to stop suffewing."

Exit Sybil with board-child. Next scene: Full set on bed. Interior of Fang's the dentist.



I was discovered preparing instruments of torture behind the dentist's chair. Sybil, now transformed into a positive Mrs. Hyde, dragged on one of the board-children, saying, "Another little victim, Mr. Fang." She held the board down in the chair while I pulled the tin-tacks out one by one, Sybil dabbing red paint on each cavity. Then, surveying the blood-spattered child, she said: "Oh, Mr. Fang, it would be cruel to return this child to its mother, so spoilt. She would hate it. Hadn't you better finish the work you've begun?"

"How?" I had to ask. "There are no more teeth."

Then Sybil literally screamed: "Saw its silly head off, Mr. Fang."

"Certainly," I answered, meekly. "But don't let me soil your pretty frock. Blood helps murder to betray itself."

"Fear not," answered Sybil. "I will leave it at the laundry this afternoon and wear my best black."

Then followed the ghastly "sawing" scene, with Sybil spattering property blood all over the stage. Here we found mother rather a trial, because whenever she witnessed it she interrupted from the audience with such remarks as, "Mind my best spare-room bed," or "Mind the lamps"—our footlights. We didn't like refined audiences. We preferred acting to the servants.

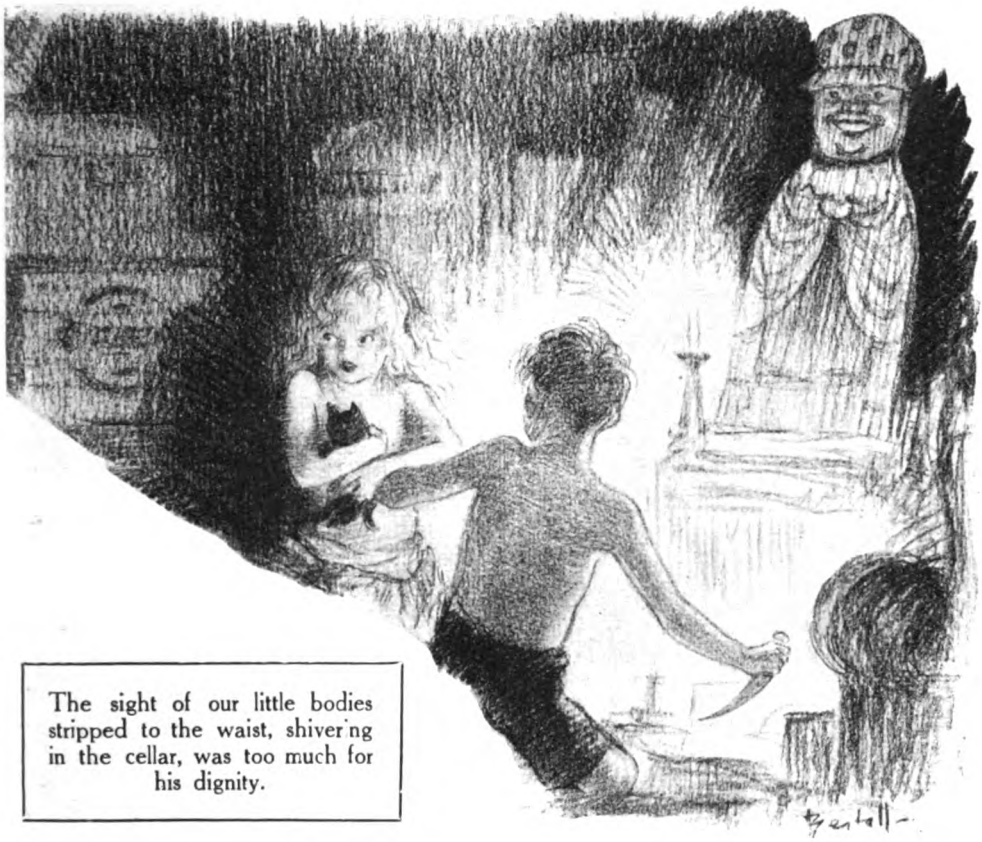
WE PRODUCE A SERVICE.

OF course, we produced services as well as plays. All clergymen's children like playing church. We did it rather thoroughly. Rather too thoroughly, as you shall see. Sybil was always the organist, and her organ was very convincing. She used to arrange all the knives from the dining-room basket with the ivory handles for white notes and the blades for the sharps and flats. Walking-sticks and umbrellas were the pedals, and a garden syringe was the tuba stop. The noise was supplied by Sybil's lungs. I put on a nightgown for a surplice, a shawl for a hood, and one of Sybil's sashes for a stole, and I preached out of the large edition of "Don Quixote," with Doré illustrations, for a Bible. Sybil doubled the *rôle* of organist with that of verger, ushering into the pews large families of hot-water cans and boots.

One Sunday father took us with him when he went to take duty at an "extreme" church. It appealed to us enormously. We thought it was much more exciting than cathedral, and the next time we played church we produced a High Mass. We discovered packed away in the box-room a real altar frontal which had been presented to father for a mission church he was building, and, vandals that we were, we actually tacked it to the nursery table. We then collected all the candlesticks in the house, and with great solemnity, to a Gregorian chant which Sybil was howling at the property organ, I entered, wearing an Indian table-centre worked with beetle-wings and gold thread for a cope, and a tea-cosy of the same make for a mitre.

Whenever Sybil paused to take breath I clanged a bell, which we had taken off father's bicycle for the purpose. The noise was dreadful, and at last poor father, preparing a sermon in his study, could stand it no longer. He came in to expostulate, and was horrified to perceive me giving Sybil drinks out of one of his rowing-cups filled with cough mixture. Poor Sybil had swallowed half a bottle of it. She would always sacrifice herself for Art or Religion. Now blasphemy had, of course, never entered our heads. We were desperately in earnest. But we felt very hurt when father ordered us to dismantle our altar immediately and promise never to do such a thing again. I know I cried bitterly with disappointment, because I had never been more carried away with anything in my life. Sybil, however, stiffened her upper lip and took another view of it. When father had gone back to his study to continue his work she gave me her views: "We must have religion of some sort, and as we can't have this one," pointing to our dismantled church, "we'll just have to go over to Baal."

Now in the cellar was one of those hideous wooden effigies used at Sunday-school treats as "Aunt Sally." We lit our Christian candles, therefore, before this idol, and, stripping ourselves to the waist, we leapt about in front of it, slashing at our bodies with ivory paper-knives and crying out as



The sight of our little bodies stripped to the waist, shivering in the cellar, was too much for his dignity.

we had heard the cathedral choir when performing the "Elijah," "Baal, we cry to thee! Hear and ah-ah-ah-ah-ahnswer us." Sybil then pretended to kill the cat for a sacrifice, and when father, once more disturbed, sought us out to complain of our further noise, he pretended to be more angry than he had been when we celebrated Mass. Unfortunately, the sight of our little bodies stripped to the waist, shivering in the cellar and lit by the candles, was too much for his dignity, and I don't know whether he would ever have stopped laughing if mother hadn't looked into the cellar and cried out that we would catch pneumonia. I did catch a bad cold. Sybil couldn't; she had drunk too much cough-mixture.

Now Dean Hole was just as fond of father and mother as he was of us, and when Sybil was nine or ten he proved it in a practical way by offering father the living of St. Margaret's, the largest parish in Rochester. We were immensely excited, because we'd always longed to live in a house behind high walls, and we felt anything might be lurking anywhere if the house were not open to the street. We'd been to tea at the vicarage, but mostly on best behaviour, and now we were actually going to live there.

SYBIL PLAYS BRUTUS.

I FIND I have not yet said anything about school. We went to lots. From what I could gather, I shone with a greater radiance in my school than Sybil did in hers.

I know that she used to start off most hopefully on the first day of the term, making up her mind to be top of the form, but a few days were quite enough to discourage her. Music and the Shakespeare classes she was always thrilled with, and I believe that from only these two studies did she get interested in other things. All her history she got from Shakespeare, and that explains the sort of patchiness of her knowledge. Until an event was in some sort of dramatic form she took no interest in it. I'll never forget when she first read "Julius Cæsar." It has always been, with "Macbeth," her favourite play. She was cast for the part of Brutus in the school performance. And a very good effort she made. For weeks the house

Age four.

resounded with "Romans, countrymen, and lovers," and many hours did she spend sewing red braid on to the edges of mother's second-best sheets for a toga. The only time Sybil was ever seen with a needle was when she was faking costumes. She loathed needlework. Still does. A most undomesticated female she was, and is, and ever will be. I never can make out how she has got the name of being a good wife and mother!

The day of the performance was a great event. I've never seen such a fuss. She took hours to dress, and then really looked too ridiculous for words, though it was as much as my skin was worth to say so. But somehow or other I always had more sense of the fitness of things than Sybil did. Perhaps I am more cautious. More of a coward. I like people to think well of me. Sybil doesn't care a button what anybody thinks. She just enjoys herself. She was never stuck on herself, but she likes pleasing herself, and she is always her own and final critic. Her maxim is, "If I feel right, then I am right, and I don't care what anyone says." That's how she used to silence me. I merely said to her on this her first Shakespearean performance, "You look wonderful—exactly like Brutus. What a pity your hair's so long, and your face so red! I'm sure you ought to be pale, with short hair."

She said, "Don't be silly. We aren't allowed to make up or wear wigs, but if the audience has any sense it will see that I really am pale, and that my hair is short, because that's how I'm *feeling* about it."

I didn't answer that. She always thought, and still thinks, that the audience knows exactly what she's feeling about a thing, even if her outside is expressing something quite different.

Now I really did not mean to say another word about her get-up for Brutus. I did not want to depress her—though I don't suppose that would have been possible. But I could not help criticizing her dagger. "I hope you're not going to use that curly thing for Brutus. Roman daggers were straight." (I had just begun the "De Bello Gallico," with pictures, and had also struck up an acquaintance with Mr. Edwin Harris, the famous Roffensian historian.)

"He might have had a curly-bladed dagger," sniffed Sybil. "How do you know he didn't?"

"Perhaps Othello sent him one for a christening present," I scoffed.

"I dare say," she answered, my wit having no effect on her. "But, anyway, that kind of thing doesn't matter at all. The theatre is make-believe. That's what it's for."

"Yes, but you can't make people believe in things that are wrong. If Mr. Harris is in the audience he'll laugh at that dagger."

"He'll be too carried away, I expect," she retorted, all inspired.

Age eight.

" Don't be cocky," I answered, thoroughly irritated. " The theatre ought to be as real as life."

" No, it oughtn't," she shouted. " It ought to make you think it's realler."

" When things are the things you can't make them realler."

" Then, I suppose, if you wanted a forest scene you'd grow real trees ? "

" Yes, if I could."

" That's silly. ' Prop ' trees are best."

" But God made real trees. You can't have better than God."

" I wasn't talking about God. And, anyway, the other day Miss Easton told us that Shakespeare would have played Brutus in a ruff and doublet and hose."

" He must have looked an ass," was my silencing comment.

We could never convince one another about this. Only the other day the same old argument cropped up. She loves looking at a curtain and describing it as a pillar. I can't. It has to be a good thick pillar to convince me, and if you can't convince yourself, how can you convince the audience ? Sybil suggested pleasantly that perhaps the audience were not all as thick as I was. I suggested that curtains were not thick enough for pillars, at which she told me not to be irritating, and to remember that Shakespeare says " thinking makes it so." Well, as this is her biography, not mine, I give her best, thankful that her husband likes " props " to be correct in his productions, and that, as Ricketts designs for them, they always are correct.

Russell Thorndike.
Age twelve.

Age fourteen.

GOOD-BYE TO "BLOOD-AND-THUNDER."

SYBIL was left to manage our theatricals alone in term-time, for I had gone to St. George's, Windsor, and Sybil attended the Girls' Grammar School in the Maidstone Road ; and with no one to back her up in her career of " blood-and-thunder " and blank verse, she succumbed and slipped. She was allowed to play in the various entertainments that experienced amateurs were arranging continuously in our parish. A charming lady, Mrs. Evans, used to do a heap of " one-acters," and Sybil was welcomed as a young recruit ; and much success did she have, playing " The Backward Child," " Shattered Nerves," and such-like comedies. So did she improve under the supervision of this excellent amateur actress that mother determined to do things on a larger scale and produce musical comedies, with Sybil in a leading part, if considered good enough. Mother has always been more ambitious for Sybil's success than Sybil herself. Sybil always wanted wonderful parts, but she never cared if they were sympathetic to the audience or not ; and that isn't the way to be a success.

As time went on mother grew more and more ambitious over her theatrical

productions, and was joined in her schemes by Claude Aveling, of Royal College of Music fame. He was the first producer that Sybil had with the smack of professional, and how she did enjoy being hauled over the coals by him. In our finest efforts we had always produced ourselves, needing the advice of none, and irritated at the slightest criticism; and even in the amateur shows we had done with other people we submitted to their wishes simply because it was their show—besides, they were all so nice, and it was fun. And now here was Sybil—the star of the box-room, whom to criticize meant contempt from us both—being shoved about, told exactly how to say lines, and told very plainly when they were not said satisfactorily, and she meekly doing what she was told. Well, it was *infra dig.*, and I told her so.

She said, "Don't be idiotic. Claude Aveling knows something that we don't know at all—he's got a way of showing me how to do a thing I can't do so that the audience are deceived. You see, Russ," she went on—I can hear her now, speaking very fast and generally too loud—"this musical comedy business you and I don't understand. We know all about horrors and tragedies and real acting, but it's when it's quite absurd, like musical things, that someone has to show you how to hide the silliness."

I went to the next rehearsal full of the noble intention of learning how to hoodwink an audience (it was making the audience more important than it should be, I thought), but I must say Sybil rather annoyed me. Claude Aveling shouted at her in the middle of a song, "For Heaven's sake, Sybil, *do* something with that song. You haven't got a voice worth calling a voice, but I did think you could act," and Sybil, instead of taking up the nearest chair and hurling it at him, as she would have done if I'd said a rotten thing like that—in front of all the company, who I felt didn't know half as much as Sybil—she only said, "I don't know how to do it—please show me," as meek as Moses.

I said to myself, "The girl's a fool; she deserves to be a musical comedy actress," or words to that effect. I was only thirteen years old, and full of ideas.

This was in a play called "Jedediah the Scarecrow," in which Sybil was a barber's block, all rigged up in white wig and black velvet, who fell in love with the tailor's dummy in the window opposite—a very charming, intriguing story which I felt they had entirely messed up. As I said to Sybil, "Look at the chances they miss with barbers and razors. Any block could have been tortured in the window, the barber thinking she couldn't feel, and Dummy Barcham opposite could know she was real and alive, and blood and gore and tears all mixed could pour over the soaps and scents in the window. I mean, this musical comedy stuff is absurd." Sybil, I was relieved to find, agreed with me. "Yes, it's all very silly and unexciting—but do shut up about it. It's something else I'm learning that you can't see."

"What?" I asked.

"I can't explain," she answered.

That was, and is, Sybil all over. She works in a Jesuitical way. People think she's enjoying something, and it's just what she'd rather be doing than anything in the world, and she's really finding out something that they never are suspecting at all, and which she won't explain even when I ask her—I, who have had most right, being her special friend always. I'd very much like to know if her husband understands what she's getting at. I doubt it. She is apparently so direct and straightforward, but she lives a double life, does that sister of mine. I tell her I'll find out about it when we both go to the next world—she only laughs and says we probably sha'n't meet, as I shall be among the criminal class.

"What about you?" I sneer. "I shall be with a different sort of criminal, I expect," she answers.

(To be continued.)

Running Away From Money

By

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

Illustrated by
FRANK WILES

MR. MERRITHORN, the eminent Scotland Yard detective, commented upon his housekeeper's depression as she arranged his breakfast before him.

"What's the matter, Mrs. Colson?"

"That oil, sir," she sighed.

"Oil?" Merrithorn repeated meditatively.

"Them shares, sir," the woman explained.

Merrithorn eyed her severely.

"Have you been foolish enough to buy oil shares, Mrs. Colson?" he asked.

"So to speak I have, sir," the woman admitted, "though it was my son-in-law—Lena's husband, you know, Alf Morris—who persuaded me into it."

"How many?"

"Well, I gave a hundred pounds for them," Mrs. Colson confessed, "but the gentleman as let Alf have 'em begged him not to part with them under a thousand."

"Did he indeed?" her lodger murmured.

"But when I took 'em down to the bank," Mrs. Colson went on, "thinking that a loan of ten pounds until the week after next

"Like to lend me these shares for the day?" Merrithorn inquired.
"From all I can hear, I might as well *give* 'em to you," the woman acquiesced gloomily.

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would be convenient, they laughed at me. "What are they worth?' I asked Mr. Jackson. He's the head cashier there. 'Just about as much as the paper they're written on, Mrs. Colson,' he replied. And that was only yesterday afternoon."

"Bring me the shares," Merrithorn enjoined.

She brought him in a stiff and formal-looking document, beautifully lithographed. The detective looked it through with interest.

"I see you have taken shares in a trust formed for floating oil companies," he remarked, "not in any particular company."

"I took what I was advised, sir."

"Like to lend me these for the day?" he inquired. "I might see if there's anything to be done."

"From all I can hear, I might as well *give* 'em to you," the woman acquiesced gloomily. "Wait till that Alf Morris comes home! I'll have a word or two with him!"

Merrithorn folded the certificates up and placed them in the breast pocket of his coat. An hour or so later he sought an interview with Detective-Inspector Saunders, his immediate chief.

"Slack time, Merrithorn," the latter remarked.

"Nothing doing for the moment," the other admitted. "What about these oil share men? They say that three of them got away with over seventy thousand pounds last week."

"Quite true, I believe," the Inspector assented, irritably. "The worst of it is they're so devilish clever that they keep just inside the law, and so long as they do that we can't touch them."

Merrithorn unfolded his certificate.

'Just so," he agreed. "I looked in to see Mr. Sharp on my way down—our legal adviser on these matters. According to him, if they only sell shares in their trust for purchasing oil property, they are on the right side of the fence. Here's one, for instance. My poor landlady gave a hundred pounds for it. I shouldn't say that it was worth tuppence."

The Inspector held out his hand and glanced it through.

"Beautifully worded," he observed, as he folded it up and returned it. "Diabolically done! We can't stop people advancing money to a trust established for the purpose of looking for oil property. We could never prove that they didn't look for it, unless, of course, the thing got absurdly flagrant."

Merrithorn nodded.

"There's just one thing I got out of Mr. Sharp," he continued. "It seems that these blackguards can sit tight in their offices and sell as much scrip of this sort as they like. No one can touch 'em for a ha'penny, but——"

"Glad to know there is a 'but,'" the other muttered.

"But," Merrithorn went on thoughtfully, "if they were to sell shares in a property which had no existence, or a very poor existence—sell the shares on what might be termed false representation—then I think we might do something."

"I suppose so," the Inspector agreed. "On the other hand, so long as they can rope in all the money they want the way they are doing, why should they bother about running risks?"

"That must come to an end some time, though," Merrithorn pointed out. "The Montana Plains Trust—or whatever they call themselves—can't go on selling shares for ever and handing out no return. If you don't mind, I should like to look in and see these people—Marston and Moore, I think the name is. One never knows. Something might come of it."

"Go right ahead," the Inspector assented.

MERRITHORN'S reception at the offices of Messrs. Marston and Moore rather surprised him. These latter were situated on the top floor of an ancient block of buildings in one of the backwaters of Aldersgate. It was barely five o'clock when he arrived, but the place was almost deserted, and an office-boy opened the door for him with reluctance.

"Don't think anyone can see you," he announced. "Have you got an appointment?"

"Unfortunately not. My business is not likely to take long, however. Just hand my card in, there's a good boy."

A half-crown did the trick, and Merrithorn, transformed into Mr. John Burroughes of Wolverhampton, was ushered grudgingly into a very handsome inner office, which had a curious air, however, of being stripped of its furniture. At one desk sat an immaculately-attired young man, clean-shaven, with olive complexion, dark eyes set a little too close together, and a bunch of violets in his buttonhole. At the other end of the room a stout man of apparently transatlantic origin was seated in his shirt-sleeves, smoking a long cigar. It was the younger gentleman who was holding the visitor's card.

"We have really finished business for the day, Mr. Burroughes," he said, warily. "What can we do for you?"

"I was thinking of a little speculation in oil," Burroughes confided. "Some friends of mine have made quite a great deal of money in it."

They looked at him critically, the young, pallid-cheeked man with a face which somehow reminded one of a weasel, and the larger, good-tempered edition of a race-course bookmaker, who was scrutinizing him from a distance.

"Who recommended you?" the former asked.

"Well, I saw your advertisement first of all," Burroughes admitted, "then I talked to a man in a bus who had bought some shares from you and seemed very well satisfied."

The two partners exchanged glances. Probably a satisfied client was a person in whom they found it hard to believe. The large man with the cigar rose to his feet.

"My name's Moore," he announced. "I am from Canada. That's my partner, Marston, there. He's the Londoner. We're about through with our business for the present, Mr. Burroughes, until we can get hold of some more land. I'm off to the States in a day or two to see whether I can arrange something. You'd better come and see us when I return."

"Sold out, eh?" Mr. Burroughes remarked, with every evidence of disappointment.

The other nodded.

"Pretty nearly," he admitted. "You see, the company we really represent is the Montana Plains Trust Company. When we opened up here we had got a dozen very interesting oil propositions, but we've sold as many shares as we care to part with in these. People are beginning to realize," he went on, "that oil to-day spells fortune—fortune, sir, with a big 'F.' There ain't any commodity in the world so badly needed. We've been lucky in our wells—free gushers most of them. I wouldn't sell my own little share for a million dollars, and yet the whole lot together wouldn't supply the city of Chicago with the petrol she needs."

"You've nothing to offer me at all, then?" the visitor persisted.

"I don't know as we have," Mr. Moore regretted, eyeing him keenly.

"We've sold two hundred thousand shares the last four days," the young man interposed, wearily. "We've even encroached upon our own holdings."

"If you have no shares to offer in the oil trust," Burroughes suggested, "I understand that you have interests in one or two other companies."

THERE was a moment's silence. Merrithorn was used to being scrutinized, but he felt that four eyes had never been turned upon him with so much critical and suspicious curiosity as during those few moments.

"There's the Little Crystal Springs," the young man reflected. "We're just putting them on the market. I really don't know that we're in a position, though, to dispose of any of them at present. There's that block of a thousand, of course," he added doubtfully, glancing across at his partner.

Mr. Moore shook his head, and went to the unusual length of removing his cigar from his mouth.

"Not a chance," he declared. "Andy's got to have those—passed my word."

"What price would they be?" the visitor asked.

"Five shillings," Mr. Moore replied. "According to the terms of the covenant, we're not allowed to sell any at more than that until the flotation. Afterwards I imagine they'll be fifty-five or sixty-five shillings within a week."

"Why shouldn't I have, say, a thousand of them?" Merrithorn inquired.

The young man opened a handsome cigarette case, lit a cigarette, and reflected for a moment. Then he took up the telephone receiver.

"Give me Central 71302.—Right."

He waited, with the receiver in his hand.

"I don't think there's a chance, mind you," he went on, "but we might just ask one of our clients whether he objects to being a thousand short on his purchase. He's got ten thousand in with us already.—Hullo! Is that you, Anderson? Sam wants to speak to you."

He handed the receiver to his partner.

"I haven't got the nerve," he confessed. "You're a better bluffer than I am."

The large man took the receiver into his hand and bellowed.

"See here, Andy," he said, "you don't want the whole of that ten thousand Crystals.—You do, eh? Well, look here, be a pal. We put you in on the ground floor on everything; let's have a thousand of them. I told you at the time, if you remember, that I wanted to reserve two thousand for a special client.—No, it's no good talking like that. I could give you a profit on them, of course, but you know as well as I do we're not allowed to deal in them except at par before the flotation. I've got your scrip for these. Let me take out a thousand, and I'll put a cheque for two hundred and fifty in their place.—Oh, get out! I'm off to the States on Monday, and I'm bound to bring back something good. I'll let you in all right. We've got a new client here from the country I don't want to disappoint.—Yes, I don't mind standing you a bite of dinner. Trocadero, eight o'clock.—That's all right, then."

Mr. Moore set down the telephone receiver

and beamed a smile of triumph across at his new client.

"Bit shirty, old Andy," he remarked. "A man worth the best part of a million, too. What's it matter to him whether he's a thousand or two of Crystals short? Make out your cheque, Mr. Burroughes. I'll hand over the scrip. They're bearer bonds, so you have nothing to worry about."

Merrithorn produced his pocket-book.

"I have brought notes," he confided.

The two men did their best to conceal their satisfaction. Marston counted the notes; his partner went carefully through a stiff, beautifully-lithographed packet of share certificates. The transaction was amicably concluded. The victim stuffed the certificates into his pocket.

"So you think these shares are likely to advance quickly?" he asked.

"They'll soar," was the confident reply.

"By the by, whereabouts is the property?" Merrithorn inquired.

The Canadian took up a long cane and slapped a map of the United States a little lackadaisically.

"There you are, just under the bend," he pointed out. "Some two hundred miles south of the Utala River. We've got your address all right? Then good evening, Mr. Burroughes. Many congratulations!"

The latter departed with the scrip in his pocket. As he entered the lift a little sharp-faced man coming up eyed him keenly. The two partners were indulging in a hearty laugh when the door was burst open and the little man rushed in.

"Say, has that guy been here that's just gone out?"

"Mr. Burroughes of Wolverhampton," Marston answered, with a grin. "Yes, he's just relieved us of two hundred and fifty pounds' worth of Little Crystals."

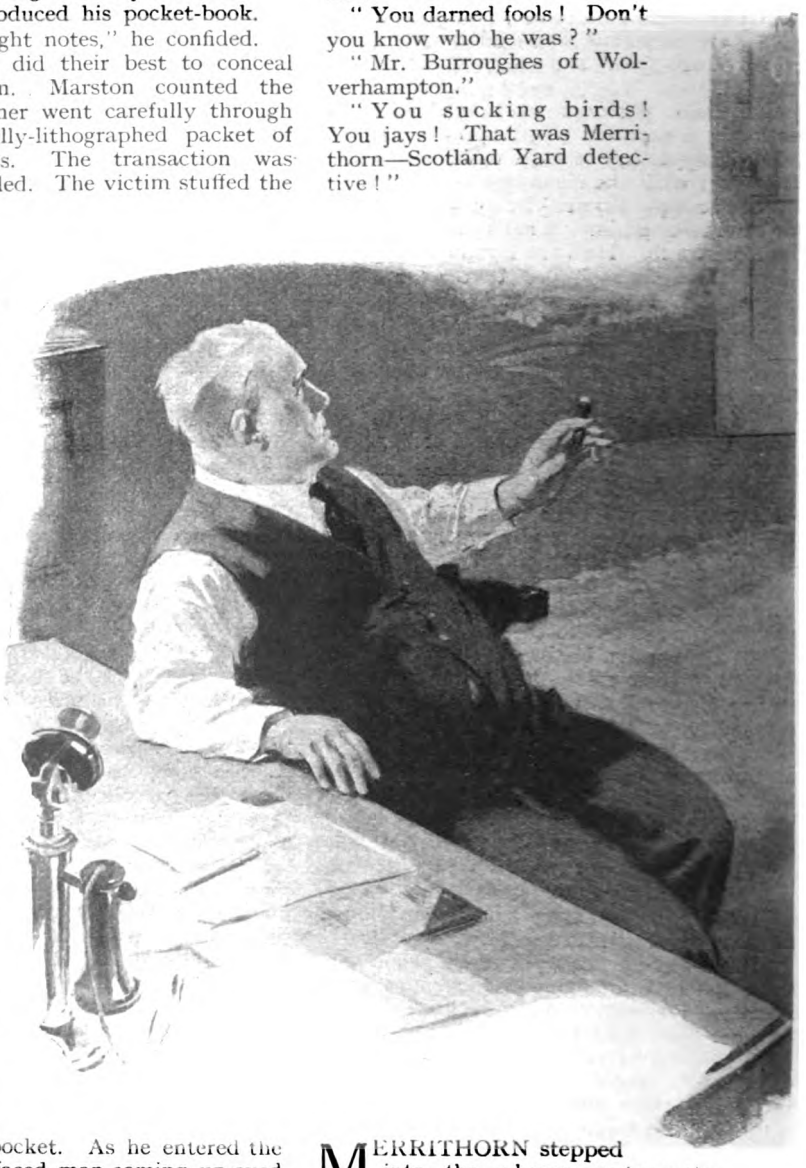
"You've sold him some shares?" the new-comer shrieked.

"Why, I guess so. What do you suppose we're here for?"

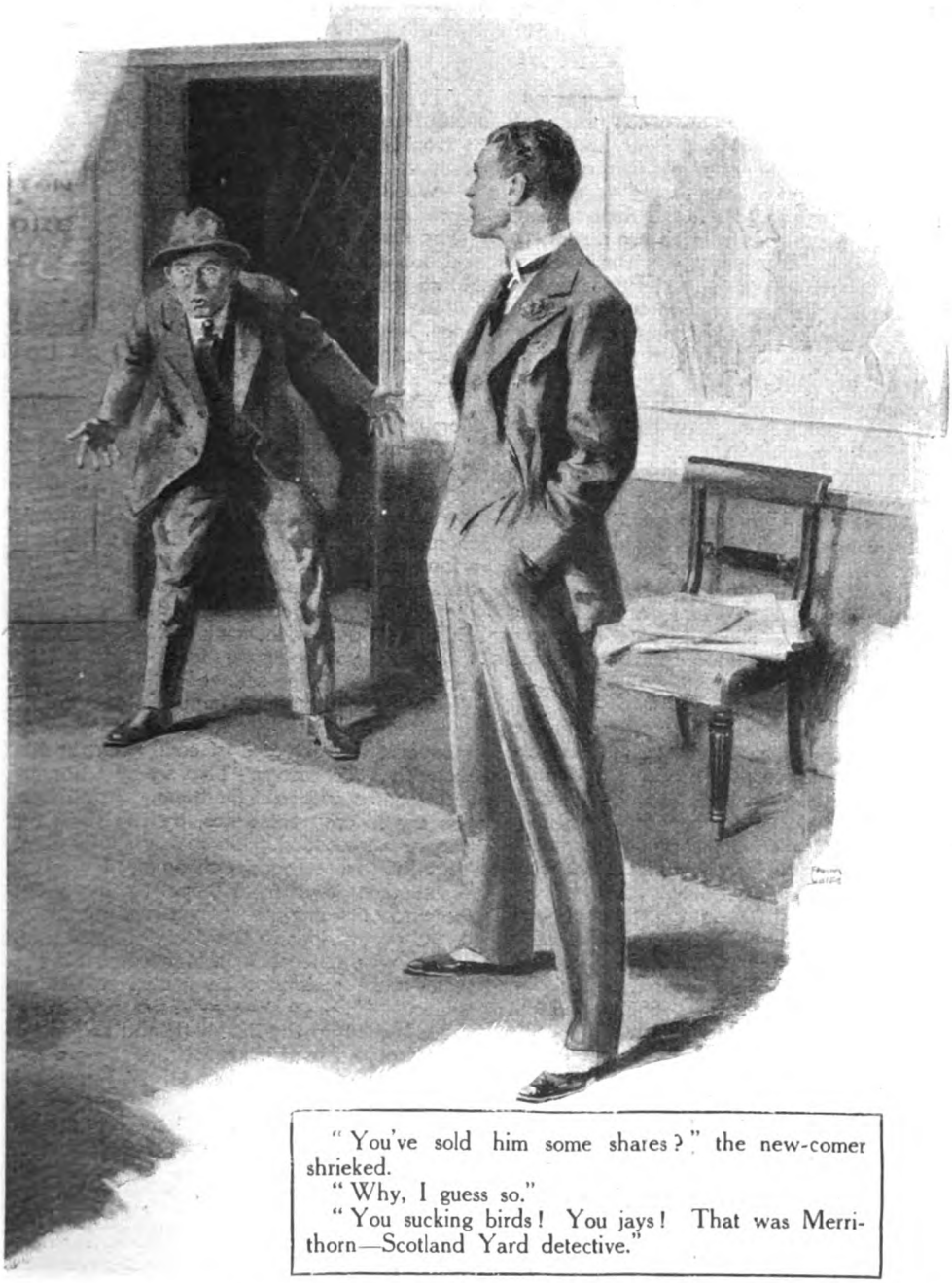
"You darned fools! Don't you know who he was?"

"Mr. Burroughes of Wolverhampton."

"You sucking birds! You jays! That was Merrithorn—Scotland Yard detective!"



MERRITHORN stepped into the wheezy automatic lift, found some difficulty in starting it, stopped once or twice on the way, but finally arrived on the ground floor. Just before he came to a standstill he had a vision of Moore, still in his shirt-sleeves,



"You've sold him some shares?" the new-comer shrieked.

"Why, I guess so."

"You sucking birds! You jays! That was Merrithorn—Scotland Yard detective."

flying down the stairs, followed a short distance behind by Marston. Scenting trouble, Merrithorn buttoned up his coat, and was prepared to sprint for the door. The partners, however, were busy recovering their breath in front of him as he stepped out. He had a glimpse of a third person, a rather formidable-looking janitor, doing something to the front door.

"Mr. Burroughes, we want just a word with you," Marston said, ingratiatingly. "The fact of it is, in our anxiety to be of service to you we have committed a commercial blunder."

"Got ourselves into a darned hole," his partner put in. "We're looking to you to help us, Mr. Burroughes."

"But what can I do?"

"It's like this," the Canadian explained. "Those shares we sold you were promised to another man. You heard us arguing with him over the telephone. He's just rung up again, and he won't listen to a darned word we have to say. He insists upon having the shares, and I am afraid he has a right to them. Here are your notes, Mr. Burroughes. I guess I'll have to ask you to let us have the shares back. I ll put you on to something equally good in a few days' time."

Mr. Burroughes looked at the notes, but made no attempt to take them. Moore, who was still blowing very hard, sat upon a wooden bench and left the discussion momentarily to his partner.

"I'm sorry," Merrithorn regretted, "but I am afraid I can't be responsible for your mistake, if you have made one. You sold me the shares all right, and I paid you the money."

"Here's your money," Mr. Marston persisted, eagerly. "You aren't being robbed. Count it. There it is—two hundred and fifty pounds. You hand over the shares, and there's no harm done."

MERRITHORN showed no signs of being prepared to hand over the shares, nor did he make any movement to take back the notes. Looking hard at them, it occurred to him that the marking, considering it had been done in one of the departments of Scotland Yard which existed for that purpose, was a little clumsy.

"I am sorry, Mr. Marston," he said—and somehow his voice sounded a great deal more incisive and decided than the voice of Mr. Burroughes. "No need to waste your time. I have the shares, and I've paid for them. I propose to keep them."

"To keep them?" Marston repeated, blankly.

"Precisely."

"Look here," the Canadian—who had now recovered his breath—interposed, "just you step upstairs with us for a minute, Mr. Burroughes. We'll open a bottle of wine and discuss this matter in a reasonable spirit."

Merrithorn smiled.

"I think not," he decided. "There's really nothing to discuss, and however good your wine may be, I am afraid I am not likely to change my mind. I won't detain you any longer."

He moved down the passage. Neither of the partners made any effort to stop him. When he reached the great front door, however, and tried the handle, he found it locked. He turned around.

"A hold-up, I imagine," he remarked, coolly.

"I reckon you fellows who get poking your noses into other people's business find a bit of trouble of that sort some time or other, don't you?" Moore observed, truculently.

"We do," Merrithorn confessed, "which is precisely why we go about prepared for it."

His hand had stolen into his hip pocket, and his small, flat automatic flashed out. Moore looked at it curiously.

"My," he observed, "it's quite a time since I saw one of those things. Didn't know they was fashionable across on this side."

"They talk just the same language," Merrithorn assured him.

"What have you got on us, anyway?" the Canadian demanded.

"Nothing except suspicions at present," Merrithorn acknowledged. "All the same, there are too many of you fellows over here selling oil shares and robbing the poor. The trouble of it is, most of you keep just within the law. A trust company is always a little difficult to deal with, isn't it, Mr. Marston? I expect you've gone into that pretty thoroughly. The sale of shares in an absolutely defunct or non-existent mine, however, is a swindle, and somehow or other I haven't a great deal of confidence in the Little Crystal Springs. That's why I bought these shares and paid for them. Mind how you try to cash the notes, by the way, for they're all marked. There's a slight legal formality to be gone through, I admit. When that is over, I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you two in the dock."

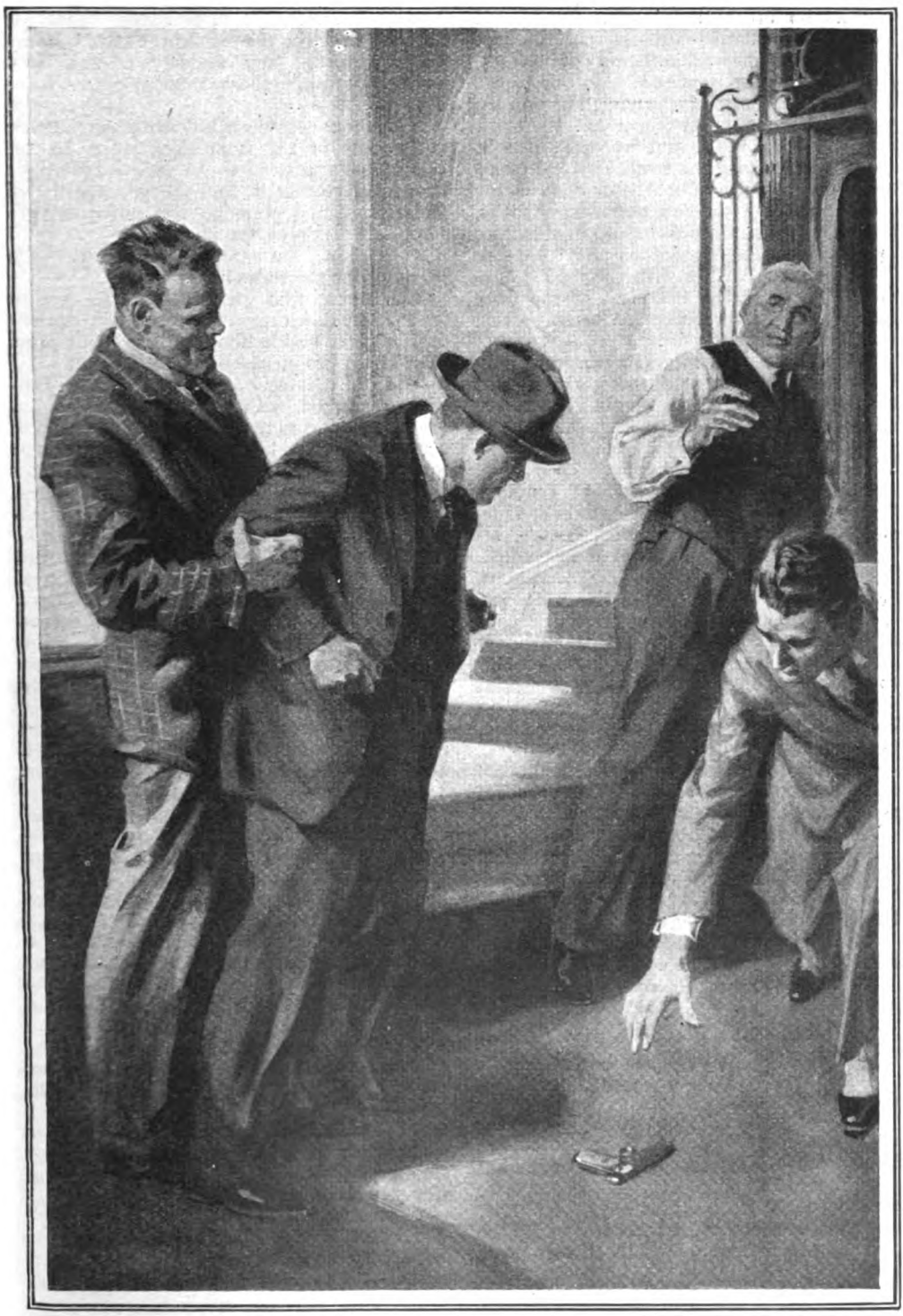
"If we ever get to the dock," Moore said, menacingly, "it will be for something a trifle more serious than selling worthless shares."

He looked up the lift shaft, and raised his hand to the side of his mouth.

"Jennings!" he bellowed. "Jennings! Come right down!"

There is no doubt that here Merrithorn was very much at fault. So far he had conducted his mission along the recognized lines, and was without a doubt top dog, but when he too leaned a little forward to watch the shaft and stairs, he committed a grave blunder. He heard nothing of the cautious opening of the door behind him. In fact, the next thing he remembered was a violent blow upon the elbow which sent his automatic clattering to the ground, and a pair of exceedingly strong arms holding him in a most unpleasant grip.

"We don't want any rough-house business," Marston remarked, stepping forward



A violent blow on the elbow sent Merrithorn's automatic clattering to the ground, and a pair of exceedingly strong arms held him in a most unpleasant grip.

and picking up the automatic. "We don't wish you any harm—Mr.—Merrithorn, isn't it? You came here all in the way of business, I suppose—your business—and we don't bear you any particular grudge, but you see we've got to look after ourselves. We know your game all right, and we don't like it. In fact, to tell you the truth, if you'd called to-morrow or even an hour later this evening you'd have been a trifle late for us. As it is, there's ten minutes' clearing up in the office for us, and then—skedaddle, eh?"

"What am I to do with the tec?" Jennings demanded, as the head of the firm, having touched the bell push, stood waiting for the descent of the lift.

"You'll keep him here for precisely three hours," Marston directed, glancing at his watch. "Treat him kindly. There are still a few bottles of wine upstairs, if he needs a drink. You know where the key is. We shall go out the back way."

"Good luck to you, guv'nors!" Jennings observed, with a parting salute as he watched them step into the lift.

"Thank you," the Canadian responded. "And good evening to you, Mr. Merrithorn. No ill feeling, I hope. All in the game, you know. Jennings will give you back your gun when you leave. A pretty little weapon, but across the pond our men have learned to have eyes in the back of their heads. Makes you feel a tiny bit silly, don't it, to be put out of court like that? Never mind. Better luck next time!"

"You're an amiable pair of scoundrels," Merrithorn remarked, coolly. "Next time we meet I may have a few more things to say."

Moore grinned at him pleasantly.

"I ain't so sure, Merrithorn," he confided, "that we're likely to meet again just yet. You see, there's no extradition for milking boobs and suckers."

"Law of nature, you know, and all that," Marston put in, as he closed the gate. "Brains will tell in this world."

THE lift shot up with a further little chorus of ironic farewells. Jennings, whose grip was still most unpleasant, chuckled audibly.

"I say, guv'nor," he observed, as the lift disappeared, "I've got your little gun handy, and if ever you goes to the second-class nights at the Albert Hall, or down to Penton Hall in Bermondsey, you may recognize me. I fought Billy Regan for the middle-weight championship three years ago."

"I knew I'd seen you somewhere before," the detective reflected.

"Well, what about giving yer parole, guv'nor? Ain't that the right word? You look an honest little chap. Tell me straight that you'll wait for the three hours without trying any monkey tricks, and we ll sit down together comfortable and have a yarn."

Merrithorn considered the situation. Even if the key of the front door were in his companion's possession, he saw very slight chance of getting it, and the geography of the rest of the premises was unknown to him. He accepted the inevitable.

"All right," he agreed. "I promise I ll be quiet for the three hours."

Merrithorn, who was still a little out of breath, sat down upon the form, the janitor took a place beside him and filled his pipe. Merrithorn produced his cigarette case.

"That's a downy pair, them, sir," Jennings remarked, with a note of unconcealed admiration in his tone. "My, they've took some money, too! Up till a few days ago you should have seen the streams of silly people, all so polite to me, too, and often sixpence or a shilling for taking them up to be plucked. A few days ago, though, after them articles in the papers, things did begin to change. We began to get some of them back again, asking nasty, inquisitive questions, and wanting the firm to return their money. They were quite right, them two. It was time they did their bunk. There was a lawyer here to-day, and pretty hard work they had to get rid of him."

"Aren't you rather afraid you may get into trouble yourself, being connected with an establishment like this?" Merrithorn asked him.

"I ain't done nothing wrong, guv'nor," the janitor pointed out. "I don't understand no more about buying and selling shares than the man in the moon. All I've had to do is to take names in and show 'em how to work the lift. I won't deny," he went on, "that I was chose for the job in case anyone came along that turned out quarrelsome, but so far there ain't been no disturbance, and this is the first bit of a scrap I've had, and this don't count. No, I ain't expecting to find any trouble, sir, and however hard them two may have been on the suckers, they've done me well. They've left me a bit better off than ever I was before. There they go," he added, after a moment's pause, as a door in the distance slammed. "Now we're alone in the building three mortal hours."

"Have we got to sit here all the time?" Merrithorn asked, significantly.

"Every blooming second," was the brutal reply. "Put your feet up, guv'nor, and make up your mind to it."

Merrithorn counted his cigarettes, produced an evening paper from his pocket, and made himself as comfortable as he could.

It was three hours to the tick before Jennings, with a grinning good night, swung open the door and let him out.

MERRITHORN, with Superintendent Ingram and one plain clothes man, took possession of the premises the following morning without any opposition. Jennings, in fact, seemed disposed to offer them all the assistance possible.

"You haven't seen either of your employers this morning, I suppose?" Merrithorn asked.

There was a little twinkle in the man's deep inset eyes.

"No, sir; nor, if you ask me, it ain't likely," he replied. "There was two steamers as left for the States early this morning, and I should reckon they're safe enough on one of them."

"You had better wait whilst we look through things," Merrithorn directed.

"I don't reckon you'll find much, guv'nor," the man predicted, taking a chair.

"It's a clean-up all right," the superintendent grumbled, as drawer after drawer was opened in vain.

The search continued unsuccessfully. There was a vast pile of torn papers about, but nothing of any significance or interest. The safe, which responded without the slightest difficulty to a little technical treatment, was empty except for great bundles of dusty parchment tied up with tape—all share certificates of different denominations in the Little Crystal Springs.

"Where did all this rubbish come from?" Merrithorn asked, looking round.

"They brought it here in a truck, sir," Jennings confided. "The guv'nor bought the lot from a friend in the same way of business who was going back to the States in a hurry. He gave five bob a packet for them. He used to say it was good policy to have a few real share certificates to show as well as the trust papers. It was trust shares he sold most, though."

"Naturally," the superintendent muttered. "Everyone who runs a swindle does it that way. A trust may mean anything."

Merrithorn leaned back in his chair.

"Well," he said, "I am afraid it's a clean-up. There isn't a bank book, cheque book, or a single book of accounts—nothing left except this muck and the furniture."

The telephone on the table tinkled. Merrithorn took off the receiver.

"Jobson speaking," a voice said cautiously. "Is that Marston and Moore?"

"It is."

"Either of the governors in?"

"Not just at present."

There was something at the other end of the telephone which sounded very much like an oath.

"Where are they?"

"We don't know," Merrithorn replied. "They haven't arrived at the office yet."

"Will you give them a message when they come in?"

"Certainly."

"They bought a whole dollop of waste paper from me some months ago—waste-paper bonds and certificates," the voice went on. "Marston told me the other day that they'd done nothing with them. I'd as lief have them back again. He gave me a tenner for the lot. He can have his money back."

"Why do you want them?" Merrithorn inquired.

"A trifle inquisitive, aren't you?" was the irritated reply. "I've found a use for them, that's all. They're worth an extra fiver—not a penny more. If George Marston wants to part, tell him to ring me up; if not, it don't matter."

"Fifteen pounds for this hundredweight or so of certificates," Merrithorn reflected, as he hung up the receiver. "Give me the telephone book, Ingram."

The superintendent passed it across. Merrithorn turned over the pages, found the name he wanted, and rang up a friend on the Stock Exchange.

"Cardrew," he asked, "you deal in oils, don't you?"

"Not more than I can help. It's a rotten uncertain market, anyway. Do you want to buy any? My advice to you is, don't."

"I don't want to buy any," Merrithorn replied, "but I wondered if you could give me any information. Was there ever a company called the Little Crystal Springs?"

There was a short laugh at the other end of the telephone.

"A sort of a one, I imagine."

"Have they any land?"

"Well, I'll tell you about them if you want to know. They're part of the great swindle of six years ago, when some of those fellows from the other side came and cleaned up about half a million. The Little Crystal Springs, as they call themselves, are situated where not a drop of oil has ever been found, or ever will be. They stuck up an old second-hand shaft, they threw a bit of earth around as though they'd been boring, and they have just as much chance of finding oil there as diamonds. That was years ago."

"You wouldn't say the shares had any value, then?" Merrithorn persisted.

"I wouldn't give a farthing a share for them," was the contemptuous reply. "There's never been oil within a hundred miles of that district, and never will be."

"Much obliged," Merrithorn replied, and rang off.

"No use wasting our time here, I'm afraid," Superintendent Ingram remarked. "We'd better get back and make our report."

"There's a dozen or so people downstairs trying to get in," Jennings observed.

"I'll write out a notice to say the place is in the hands of the police," Merrithorn decided, taking out a fountain pen.

Suddenly there was a knock at the door. Jennings looked up in surprise. A stout, red-faced little man came hurrying in. He looked around him in amazement.

"Why, it's Mr. Jobson!" Jennings exclaimed, in friendly fashion. "How did you get here, sir?"

"By the back way," the little man answered. "What's all this?"

"The place is in the hands of the police," Merrithorn told him. "What do you want, sir?"

"Just a bit of my property, that's all," was the anxious reply. "I let George Marston have a hundredweight or so of waste paper to decorate the place with. I want it back again."

The detective took up a packet of the shares.

"This is what you mean, I suppose?"

Mr. Jobson nodded. He was doing his best to appear casual, but it was difficult.

"That's it," he admitted. "They're worth a trifle for waste waper, and I am willing to pay it. You won't have any objection to my taking them away?"

Merrithorn shook his head.

"Not even a penholder can leave this office, Mr. Jobson," he pronounced. "As a matter of form, a receiver will be in possession of the premises to-morrow. If there is anything worth selling or parting with you can deal with him. It isn't our business."

Mr. Jobson pleaded, but in vain. He left the room reluctantly, but almost as he closed the door he reopened it and appeared again.

"Look here," he confided, "I ll admit I'm in a hole about that muck. It don't belong to me, and I oughtn't to have sold it. What about a hundred pounds apiece for you two, and mum's the word."

Merrithorn frowned at him sternly.

"Mr. Jobson," he said, "you have had your answer. Nothing will leave this office unless authorized by the receiver. Good morning."

A crestfallen dealer in high-class stocks and shares took his leave. Merrithorn carefully locked all the dusty packets away in the safe.

"They can't be worth anything," he observed, "but one may as well make sure."

"NEW OIL AREA DISCOVERED IN TEXAS. GREAT RUSH OF PROSPECTORS. WASTE LAND WORTH MILLIONS."

Merrithorn and Ingram read the news on the placards as they made their way back to Scotland Yard. Marston and Moore read it on the wireless sheets of their Westward-bound steamer, and were crazy men for two days until the great elucidation came to them, whereupon they travelled out to Texas, verified their claim, returned to England, declared a dividend on the Montana Plains Trust Company, under whose auspices they announced that the Little Crystal Springs had been acquired, were exceedingly hurt when anyone hinted at anything in the shape of shady business in the past, talked loudly of a prosecution of the police for entering their premises, and became finally more or less respectable financiers of the City of London.

Merrithorn's housekeeper sold her holdings in the Montana Plains Trust Company for a sum larger than her savings of a lifetime, and the Police Orphanage benefited by an unexpected grant of four thousand pounds, the proceeds of the sale of one thousand Little Crystal Springs. Scotland Yard, however, looked upon the whole thing as a disaster.

"The sharks have got us now," Detective-Inspector Saunders grumbled. "We'll never be able to prove that anything's a swindle."

Merrithorn was more sanguine, though a little cynical.

"They may last a little longer, but they ll end with us," he prophesied.

The Chantrey Bequest

SPECIAL TREASURES ACQUIRED IN RECENT YEARS

By ARTHUR LAWRENCE

THE story of Sir Francis Chantrey has all the interest which attaches to the triumph of character over all obstacles. It was by character and great strength of purpose that this poor and fatherless lad attained eminence and built up a fortune.

The son of a carpenter, Francis Leggatt Chantrey was born at Norton, Derbyshire, on April 7th, 1781. His early years were passed at Jordanthorpe, a Derbyshire village, near Sheffield, where his father rented a small farm, as a means of supplementing his slender earnings. When Francis was twelve years of age his father died, leaving but a small provision for the family, so that the boy had to begin life as a wage-earner in the shop of a grocer in Sheffield.

He first became conscious of a feeling for art as the result of constantly passing the shop of a graver and gilder in a Sheffield street. In his sixteenth year his desires in this direction were satisfied, for a time, by becoming apprenticed to Ramsay, the owner of the shop in question. He began to experiment with pencils and modelling clay, and a fortunate meeting with the famous engraver, J. R. Smith, led to lessons from that artist in the art of portraiture in coloured chalks. A friendly mason taught him the use of the mallet and chisel on marble and stone. Another acquaintance, finding himself greatly interested in the youth, instructed him in the art of painting in oils. The progress made under this combined tuition was such that, in 1802, he was able to buy himself out of his indentures and support himself by doing portraits in crayons, for two or three guineas apiece.

Before long he made his way up to London. His craft as a woodcarver supplied him with the means of a living, and in the Royal Academy schools he developed his powers. There he attracted the attention of Nollekens, who had achieved fame as a sculptor. It is reported that, on one occasion, Nollekens was inspecting the sculpture arranged in the Academy, before the Exhibition was opened, when, standing in front of a bust of his own making, which had been placed on a pedestal, he exclaimed: "There is a young man here in the schools, named Chantrey, whose merit ought to be recognized. Take my work away and put one of his works in its place." And, in obedience to his word, this was done.

This magnanimity gave Chantrey his chance. The exhibition of his sculpture, in 1805, brought him a commission for a marble bust. This was followed by another order for colossal busts of Duncan, Howe, Vincent, and Nelson, for Greenwich Hospital, at the munificent remuneration of ten pounds apiece. In 1807 his days of poverty came to an end. He married a cousin whose income was sufficient to keep absolute want from the door and he redoubled his efforts. His bust of Horne Tooke secured him commissions to the extent, it is said, of over twelve thousand pounds. In 1815 he was elected A.R.A. and in 1818 to full membership. He died in 1841, in the sixtieth year of his age,

leaving a fortune of a hundred and fifty thousand pounds.

THE intention of the Bequest is clearly stated in the following extract from Chantrey's will, in which the italics and capitals are his own:—

"The residue of the monies shall be laid out in the purchase of WORKS OF FINE ART OF THE HIGHEST MERIT IN PAINTING AND SCULPTURE that can be obtained, either already executed or which may hereafter be executed by Artists of any nation, provided such Artists shall have actually resided in Great Britain during the executing and completing of such works, it being my express direction that no work of Art, whether executed by a deceased or living Artist, shall be purchased unless the same shall have been entirely executed within the SHORES OF GREAT BRITAIN."

It will be seen that the artists of other nations are not excluded, but they are not much encouraged, for foreign artists are not much inclined to come over here to paint on the very doubtful chance of having their works selected by the Trustees of the Bequest, and in the will it is also provided "*no commissions or orders*" (the italics are Chantrey's) "for the execution of works to be afterwards painted shall at any time be given by the President and Council of the Royal Academy."

THE pictures reproduced here have been selected in order to recall some of the most striking of the works which, during the past quarter of a century, have been added to the Chantrey collection.

The exquisite poems in paint which come from the brush of Charles Sims, R.A., of which "The Fountain" (1908) is a brilliant example, are not less appreciated by his brother artists than by the public; while even the extreme "Modernist" adds his praise to the high approval of painters and critics of more conservative views. The fact is that Mr. Sims is able to give us his own impressions and satisfy his instinct for decorative effect without that sacrifice of form which makes the ultra-modern effort too fantastic for the wayfaring man, and too hopeless in technique for the better-skilled artist. Mr. Sims makes his human forms quite beautiful in themselves, whilst dexterously bringing them into accord with an environment which has been idealized in the mind of the artist. There is not a suspicion of the literary element in his work, so that the effect of the picture upon our emotions is entirely due to its pictorial quality.

In the "Moonlit Shore" (1911), by Julius Olsson, R.A., we are presented with one of those aspects of sea and shore to which, in the main, this distinguished artist has devoted the greater part of his time and ability. He has always shown a keen sense of values, and the contrast of darkness and the distant gleam of the warning light, with the effect of the moonlight on the waves as they gently break on the shore, is an accomplishment which reveals his powers of observation and his high technical skill. When I called upon him at his house in South Kensington he told me I was right in believing that his picture represents a bit of the north coast of Cornwall.

"Yes," he replied, "the picture was made at St. Ives, that quaint old fishing-town, running down to the sands and sheltered by the great granite cliffs. What a wonderful scene is presented at night, when a score of 'drifters' are out for a catch of herrings and you see the lights of the 'drifters' twinkling here and there, sometimes brilliant, sometimes paling as the scurrying clouds hide or reveal the bright beams of the moon! On the north coast, in fine weather, the air is exceptionally clear, and, of course, one has to allow for that in one's pictures."

"The Poulterer's Shop" (1916), by Frank Brangwyn, R.A., is a powerful still-life study, writ large, for, although Mr. Brangwyn's versatility extends to graving on wood, within a very limited compass, he is most at home with the big canvas and, more particularly, with subjects indicating human energy, or displaying the man of brawn at his work. This picture is, indeed, a fine achievement, and well illustrates the breadth and power which one associates with this great artist's brush.

Pure landscape is represented by a fine example of the work of Sir David Murray, R.A.—"In the Country of Constable" (1903), which, of course, is East Anglia. The locality of Sir David's picture is Flatford (on the Stour), and the church of Dedham can be seen in the distance. The strength and breadth of treatment shown in this picture justifies the artist's boldness in challenging the older master, as it were, on his own ground; and we may congratulate ourselves on the fact that the public appreciation of good work has quickened and grown a good deal since Constable's day, for, although his work had been enthusiastically welcomed in France, where it created a school of landscape painters, it is said that when at long last he was elected "R.A.," he was heard to murmur: "Too late!" Sir David Murray, the great landscape painter of to-day, was born into an age when good art is more swiftly acclaimed.

In "The Heretic" (1906), by the late Frank Craig, we have a picture of powerful

dramatic effect, a period picture, wherein a dreadful deed of the past has been visualized and re-embodied by the skill of the artist. The thought of this bigotry and the uncouth passions of the mob makes one feel as if this is an incident in a very remote past—so far have we travelled in the direction of agreeing to differ without endeavouring to enforce our view of the truth upon anyone else by such methods as these. It is not generally known that this picture was originally purchased by the late Sir Henry W. Lucy, the brilliant author and journalist who, as "Toby, M.P.," travestied the doings of Parliament for so many years in the pages of *Punch*. Being unaware of the sale, the President and Council of the Academy decided to buy it out of the funds of the Chantrey Bequest. Realizing that this would do more good to the artist, Lucy surrendered the ownership, but afterwards arranged with the artist to paint a replica for him, which is no whit inferior to the original, now to be seen in the Tate Gallery.

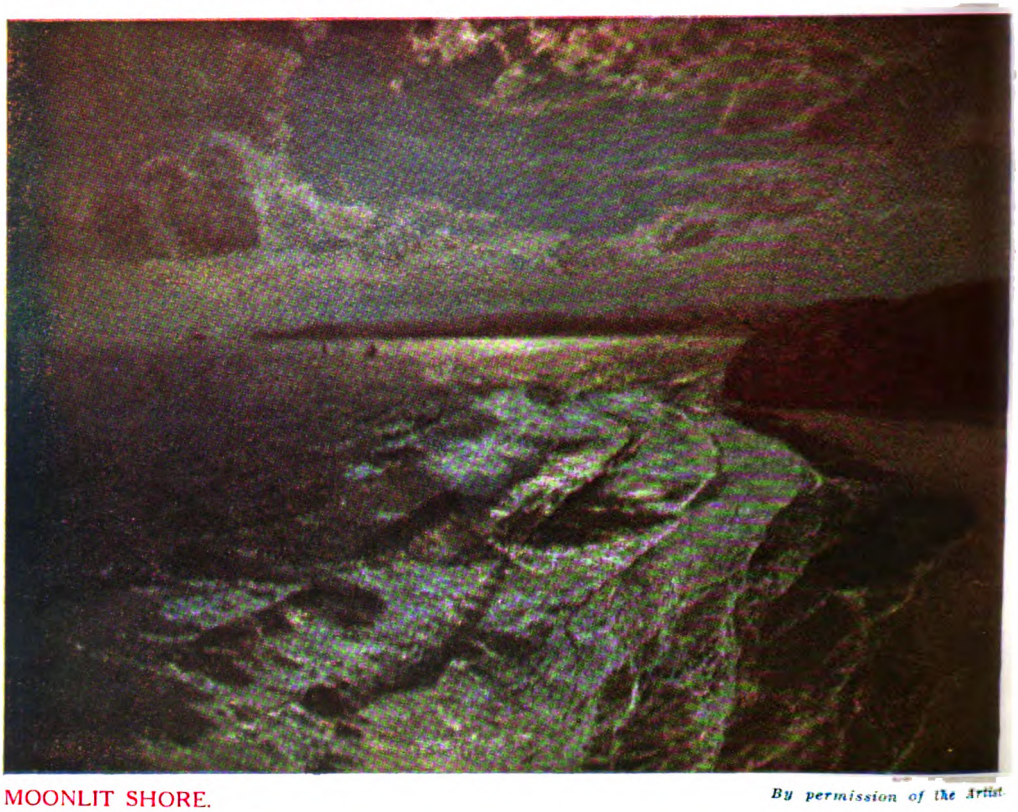
"Sunshine, Breeze, and Blossom: Lake Como" (1913), by J. Walter West, has a brightness and charm which can hardly be translated into cold type. But Mr. West was good enough to have a chat with me on the subject, when I called upon him at his beautiful house in Northwood, where he is the happy owner of an exquisite garden, so beautifully cultivated and with such perfect lawns that Mr. Sherlock Holmes would have seen immediately that the artist had lived there for not less than twenty years, without being informed of the fact. Every sort of encouragement is given to a great variety of birds, the woodpecker and others, although the raspberry canes are adequately protected by small hanging mirrors which disturb the more venturesome by the novelty of their flashes of the reflected light of the sun—when it shines. But if I were to record all the delightful things I saw in my visit, the pages of this issue would scarcely contain what might be written.

Trained in the Academy schools, under Leighton's presidentship, Mr. West told me that he had Millais as a visitor during his studentship, while Frith, who was then advanced in years (he was made R.A. in 1853

THE FOUNTAIN.
By Charles Sims, R.A.

By permission of the Artist.

and died in 1910, aged ninety-one), would take his turn among the instructors. "On one occasion," said Mr. West, "I had the interesting experience of being in the Tate Gallery when a lecturer, who did not know I was there, held forth to the crowd concerning my picture and astonished me by referring to it as an 'Impressionist'



MOONLIT SHORE.
By Julius Olsson, R.A.

By permission of the Artist

work. Largely influenced by Millais in my early days, I had always adhered strictly to the principle of neglecting no detail, however small, in landscape work, but the remark of the lecturer served to remind me that in recent years I have been rather getting away from a rigid representation of the scene before me, except in essentials. In fact, for some time past I have been in the habit of memorizing the scene, reducing the sketch-book notes to very small proportions indeed. All my best work, including Academy pictures on a considerable scale, has been produced from mere jottings. Indeed, I have found that the more complete the sketch, the worse the resultant picture. The picture which your Editor has selected for reproduction was painted entirely from a pencil sketch, five inches by seven."

"Beverley Arms Kitchen" (1919), by F. W. Elwell, R.W.S., is an extremely clever and most engaging presentment of that department which is the very heart of an old inn, and of those who work there. Writing from his home in Beverley, "The Bar House," which joins up with and is of the same date as The Beverley Arms, and has one room in which Charles II. is alleged to have slept, Mr. Elwell remarks: "I am afraid I cannot give you many interesting particulars of 'The Beverley Arms.' It is a very good specimen of the old-fashioned hotel one finds in old country towns. It is situated in Beverley, East Yorks, and was a very busy place in the old coaching days, being on the main road between Hull and York." In addition to the Paris Salon, Mr. Elwell has exhibited frequently in the Academy, since his first appearance there in 1903, mostly portraits and subject works, and is noted for invariably finding novel themes for his exceptional skill.

All who are familiar with Sir John Lavery's charming work will renew their enjoyment of it by reason of the life and colour which he has infused into his virile record of "The Jockeys' Dressing-Room at Ascot" (1924). It is one of those strong and

THE POULTERER'S SHOP.
By Frank Brangwyn, R.A.

By permission of the Artist.

brilliant interiors which attain a powerful effect by reason of the artist's command of subdued tone effects and his skilful manipulation of paint.

"Rehearsal with Nikisch" (1912), by Richard Jack, R.A., is a vivid and particularly accurate rendering of a subject which Mr. Jack told me he had decided

IN THE COUNTRY OF CONSTABLE.
By Sir David Murray, R.A.

By permission of The Fine Art Society.

THE HERETIC.
By Frank Craig.

By permission of Messrs. C. W. Faulkner & Co. Ltd

to put on to canvas for many reasons. One is that he is so fond of music that sometimes he sat entranced at rehearsal instead of getting on with his work, but the main reason was that this grouping of figures provided such a good composition, while

SUNSHINE, BREEZE, AND BLOSSOM: LAKE COMO.
By J. Walter West.

By permission of the Artist.

he admired the decorative effect of black and orange. Moreover, he had conceived a great admiration for Nikisch (since deceased) as a conductor. In fact, Mr. Jack painted a portrait of him, apart from this picture, in which, by the way, the lineaments of most of the orchestra are faithfully rendered.

"He was not only a great musician," the artist remarked, "but he had a most magnetic personality and seemed to get a better grip on his orchestra than any other conductor. One of the executants told me that Nikisch 'takes more out of us than anyone else.' Yet he was never excited or domineering, but carried on with a quiet determination to get the best out of them in a manner which was wholly his own." Before I left, Mr. Jack was good enough to show me one of the most perfect paintings of an interior I have ever seen, the library in Chesterfield House. In this year's Academy Mr. Jack had a portrait of H.M. the Queen, and another of his delightful interiors—the Blue Room at Buckingham Palace, which were reproduced in last month's STRAND MAGAZINE.

THE BEVERLEY ARMS KITCHEN. *By permission of the Artist.*
By F. W. Elwell.

"Princess Badroulbadour" (1924), by William Rothenstein, is a truly wonderful picture, both as evidence of the highest technical skill and as a sensitive, sincere, and unsurpassable study of childhood. There is no subject so apt to lead even an accomplished artist astray. I have seen hundreds of pictures of the "Mummie! Here I tum!" description, which I trust have long since been destroyed, or painted out. But here all is right—nothing exaggerated, nothing sensuous—no sugary sentiment. The genius of the artist converts us all into clairvoyants. It is more than a picture we see—it is life itself—the very budding forth of our existence. Here, for once, is that unconscious dignity which characterizes all normal children. In their "dressing-up" they remain somewhat aloof from, and easily superior to, the most gorgeous adornment. Wrapped in their innocence and their simplicity, the most accomplished actress, or the best-bred Princess in her own right, can never leave upon us that ineffable impression which we receive from the diffident masquerade of these well-born little children.

It seemed to me, as I stood before the original work, that we sophisticated grown-ups can hardly look upon this bit of real life,

THE JOCKEYS' DRESSING-ROOM AT ASCOT.
By Sir John Lavery, R.A.

By permission of the Artist.

REHEARSAL WITH NIKISCH.
By Richard Jack, R.A.

By permission of the Artist.

THE PRINCESS BADROULBADOUR. *By permission of the Artist.*
By William Rothenstein.

from which the veil has been lifted by the exercise of supreme art, without a wistful hope that we still retain in us something of this spirit of childhood, for here we are helped to understand what was implied by One who said, "Except ye become as one of these little ones——" It is, indeed, an almost incomparable study of childhood, and, in its own way, ranks with the finest efforts of Reynolds, who, in his time, like Rothenstein in ours, raised the presentment of youthful innocence from sentimental slush to the high truths of the Empyrean.

It occurred to me to write and ask Mr. Rothenstein if he would tell me who were the originals of this rare composition, and his wife has been good enough to send me a letter, which I reproduce here, because there is that something in it which might be lost in a paraphrase. From an hotel in Bad Nauheim, Mrs. Rothenstein writes:—

"My husband is taking the cure here, and so is not attending to any correspondence, but I thought I would just like to tell you that the children in the picture—'Princess Badroulbadour'—are our own; Rachel is the Princess Badroulbadour and the others, John and Betty, her attendants. The picture was painted in 1908—and was inspired by the children dressing up in some Persian clothes, which they were very fond of doing. I am really so glad you care so much for the picture. I noticed when the King and Queen opened the Duveen wing of the Tate Gallery that the Queen went over several times to look at this picture, and the Director wrote to say that the Queen had admired it so much. My husband was not able to be present on that occasion, but, as the wife of the artist and mother of the children in the picture, I was very naturally delighted."

With fierce gestures and cries the priests of the Temple drove us roughly out of their sacred shrine.

The MARACOT DEEP:

The Lost World under the Sea

By

A. CONAN DOYLE

Illustrated by
TOM PEDDIE

SYNOPSIS OF THE PREVIOUS INSTALMENTS.

Professor Maracot, the famous scientist, organized an expedition for studying deep-sea life, and with two assistants—Cyrus Headley, an Oxford Rhodes scholar, and Bill Scanlan, a mechanic—he sailed from England for some unknown destination. Shortly afterwards, in a letter written from the Canary Islands, Headley described how Professor Maracot had astonished his companions by announcing that on board was a steel cage, with crystal windows, in which they were to be lowered to the bed of the ocean. Nearly a year of silence followed this letter and the expedition was regarded as lost, when news of Professor Maracot was received in an extraordinary manner. The captain of a tramp steamer reported the finding of a silvery globe or ball floating in the water, which contained a further message from Cyrus Headley. This stated that the Professor's plan had succeeded and that the cage with its three occupants was successfully lowered over the brink of the Maracot Deep when a gigantic sea-monster snapped the chain, and the cage sank in the enormous cavity five miles deep. The narrative then told how Professor Maracot and his companions were startled to find on the ocean bed a submarine race of men who rescued them from their cage by means of transparent suits in which they could breathe without difficulty.

III.

AND now a most surprising incident occurred, which was clearly as astonishing to these strange new companions of ours as to ourselves. Above our heads there appeared a small, dark object, descending from the darkness above us and swinging down until it reached the bed of the ocean within a very short distance from where we stood. It was, of course, the deep-sea lead from the *Stratford* above us, making a sounding of that watery gulf with which the name of the expedition was to be associated. We had seen it already upon its downward path, and we could well understand that the tragedy of our disappearance had suspended the operation, but that after a pause it had been concluded with little thought that it would finish almost at our feet. They were unconscious, apparently, that they had touched bottom, for the lead lay motionless in the ooze. Above me stretched the taut piano wire which connected me through five miles of water with the deck of our vessel. Oh, that it were possible to write a note and to attach it! The idea was absurd, and yet could I not send some message which would show them that we were still conscious? My coat was covered by my glass bell and the pockets were unapproachable, but I was free below the waist and my handkerchief chanced to be in my trouser pocket. I pulled it out and tied it round the top of the lead. The weight itself at once disengaged itself by its automatic mechanism,

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and presently I saw my white wisp of linen flying upwards to that world which I may never see again. Our new acquaintances examined the seventy-five pounds of lead with great interest, and finally carried it off with us as we went upon our way.

We had only walked a couple of hundred yards, threading our way among the hummocks, when we halted before a small square-cut door, with solid pillars on either side, and an inscription across the lintel. It was open, and we passed through it into a large, bare chamber. There was a sliding partition worked by a crank from within, and this was drawn across behind us. We could, of course, hear nothing in our glass helmets, but after standing a few minutes we were aware that a powerful pump must be at work, for we saw the level of the water sinking rapidly above us. In less than a quarter of an hour we were standing upon a sloppy stone-flagged pavement, while our new friends were busy in undoing the fastenings of our transparent suits. An instant later there we stood, breathing perfectly pure air in a warm, well-lighted atmosphere, while the dark people of the abyss, smiling and chattering, crowded round us with hand-shakings and friendly pattings. It was a strange, rasping tongue that they spoke, and no word of it was intelligible to us, but the smile on the face and the light of friendship in the eye are understandable even in the waters under the earth. The glass suits were hung on numbered pegs upon the wall, and the kindly folk half led and half pushed us to an inner door which opened on to a long downward-sloping corridor. When it closed again behind us there was nothing to remind us of the stupendous fact that we were the involuntary guests of an unknown race at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean and cut off for ever from the world to which we belonged.

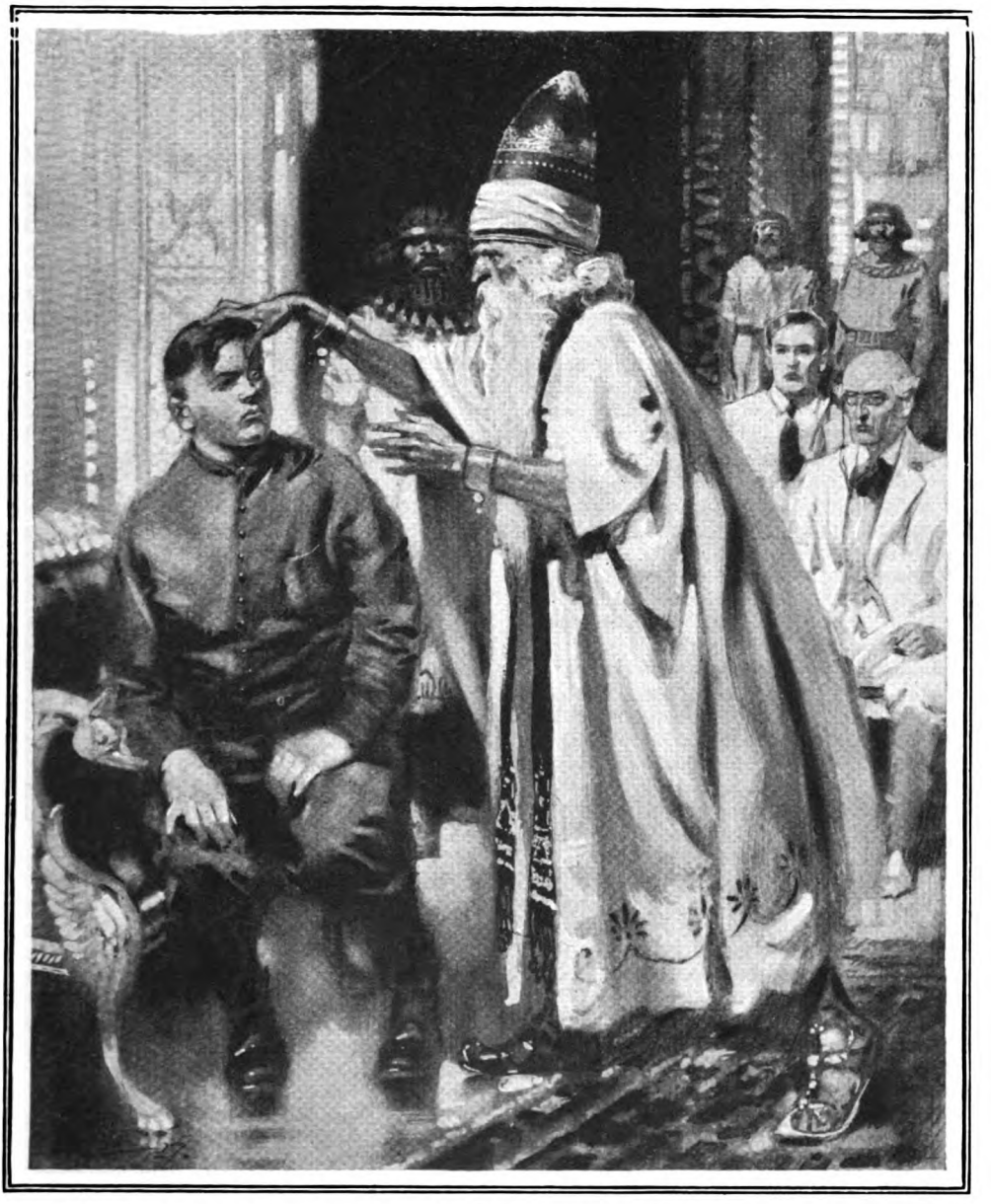
Now that the terrific strain had been so suddenly eased we were all exhausted. Even Bill Scanlan, who was a pocket Hercules, dragged his feet along the floor, while Maracot and I were only too glad to lean heavily upon our guides. Yet, weary as I was, I took in every detail as we passed. That the air came from some air-making machine was very evident, for it issued in puffs from circular openings in the walls. The light was diffused and was clearly an extension of that fluor system which was already engaging the attention of our European engineers when the filament and lamp were dispensed with. It shone from long cylinders of clear glass which were suspended along the cornice of the passages. So much I had observed when our descent was checked and we were ushered into a large sitting-room, thickly carpeted and well furnished with gilded chairs and sloping sofas which brought back vague memories of Egyptian tombs. The crowd had been dismissed and only the bearded man with two attendants remained. "Manda," he repeated several times, tapping himself upon the chest. Then he pointed to each of us in turn and repeated the words Maracot, Headley, and Scanlan until he had them perfect. He then motioned us to be seated and said a word to one of the attendants, who left the room and returned presently, escorting a very ancient gentleman, white-haired and long-bearded, with a curious conical cap of black cloth upon his head. I should have said that all these folk were dressed in coloured tunics, which extended to their knees, with high boots of fish skin or shagreen. The venerable new-comer was clearly a physician, for he examined each of us in turn, placing his hand upon our brows and closing his own eyes as if receiving a mental impression as to our condition. Apparently he was by no means satisfied, for he shook his head and said a few grave words to Manda. The latter at once sent the attendant out once more, and he brought in a tray of eatables and a flask of wine, which were laid before us. We were too weary to ask ourselves what they were, but we felt the better for the meal. We were then led to another room, where three beds had been prepared, and on one of these I flung myself down. I have a dim recollection of Bill Scanlan coming across and sitting beside me.

"Say, Bo, that jolt of brandy saved my life," said he. "But where are we, anyhow?"

"I know no more than you do."

"Well, I am ready to hit the hay," he said sleepily, as he turned to his bed. "Say, that wine was fine. Thank God, Valstead never got down here." They were the last words I heard as I sank into the most profound sleep that I can ever recall.

WHEN I came to myself I could not at first imagine where I was. The events of the previous day were like some blurred nightmare, and I could not believe that I had to accept them as facts. I looked round in bewilderment at the large, bare, windowless room with drab-coloured walls, at the lines of quivering purplish light which flowed along the cornices, at the scattered articles of furniture, and finally at the two other beds, from one of which came the high-pitched, strident snore which I had learned aboard the *Stratford*, to associate with Maracot. It was too grotesque to be true, and it was only when I fingered my bed-cover and observed the curious woven



The venerable physician examined each of us in turn, placing his hand upon our brows and closing his eyes as if receiving a mental impression as to our condition.

material, the dried fibres of some sea plant, from which it was made, that I was able to realize this inconceivable adventure which had befallen us. I was still pondering it when there came a loud explosion of laughter, and Bill Scanlan sat up in bed.

"Mornin', Bo!" he cried, amid his chuckles, on seeing that I was awake.

"You seem in good spirits," said I, rather testily. "I can't see that we have much to laugh about."

"Well, I had a grouch on me, the same as you, when first I woke up," he answered. "Then came a real cute idea, and it was that that made me laugh."

"I could do with a laugh myself," said I. "What's the idea?"

"Well, Bo, I thought how durned funny

it would have been if we had all tied ourselves on to that deep-sea line. I allow with those glass dinguses we could have kept breathing all right. Then when old man Howie looked over the side there would have been the whole bunch of us comin' up at him through the water. He would have figured that he had hooked us, sure. Gee, what a spiel!"

Our united laughter woke the Doctor, who sat up in bed with the same amazed expression upon his face which had previously been upon my own. I forgot our troubles as I listened in amusement to his disjointed comments, which alternated between ecstatic joy at the prospect of such a field of study, and profound sorrow that he could never hope to convey his results to his scientific *confrères* of the earth. Finally he got back to the actual needs of the moment.

"It is nine o'clock," he said, looking at his watch. We all registered the same hour, but there was nothing to show if it was night or morning.

"We must keep our own calendar," said Maracot; "we descended upon October 3rd. We reached this place on the evening of the same day. How long have we slept?"

"My gosh, it may have been a month," said Scanlan, "I've not been so deep since Mickey Scott got me on the point in the six round try-out at the Works."

WE dressed and washed, for every civilized convenience was at hand. The door, however, was fastened, and it was clear that we were prisoners for the time. In spite of the apparent absence of any ventilation, the atmosphere kept perfectly sweet, and we found that this was due to a current of air which came through small holes in the wall. There was some source of central heating, too, for though no stove was visible, the temperature was pleasantly warm. Presently I observed a knob upon one of the walls, and pressed it. This was, as I expected, a bell, for the door instantly opened, and a small, dark man, dressed in a yellow robe, appeared in the aperture. He looked at us inquiringly, with large brown, kindly eyes.

"We are hungry," said Maracot; "can you get us some food?"

The man shook his head and smiled. It was clear that the words were incomprehensible to him.

Scanlan tried his luck with a flow of American slang, which was received with the same blank smile. When, however, I opened my mouth and thrust my finger into it, our visitor nodded vigorously and hurried away.

Ten minutes later the door opened and two of the yellow attendants appeared, rolling a small table before them. Had we been at the Biltmore Hotel we could not have had better fare. There were coffee, hot milk, rolls, delicious flat fish, and honey. For half an hour we were far too busy to discuss what we ate or whence it was obtained. At the end of that time the two servants appeared once more, rolled out the tray, and closed the door carefully behind them.

"I'm fair black and blue with pinching myself," said Scanlan. "Is this a pipe dream or what? Say, Doc, you got us down here, and I guess it is up to you to tell us just how you size it all up."

The Doctor shook his head.

"It is like a dream to me also, but it is a glorious dream! What a story for the world if we could but get it to them!"

"One thing is clear," said I, "there was certainly truth in this legend of Atlantis, and some of the folk have in a marvellous way managed to carry on."

"Well, even if they carried on," cried Bill Scanlan, scratching his bullet head, "I am darned if I can understand how they could get air and fresh water and the rest. Maybe if that queer duck with the beard that we saw last night comes to give us a once-over he will put us wise to it."

"How can he do that when we have no common language?"

"Well, we shall use our own observation," said Maracot. "One thing I can already understand. I learned it from the honey at breakfast. That was clearly synthetic honey, such as we have already learned to make upon the earth. But if synthetic honey, why not synthetic coffee, or flour? The molecules of the elements are like bricks, and these bricks lie all around us. We have only to learn how to pull out certain bricks—sometimes just a single brick—in order to make a fresh substance. Sugar becomes starch, or either becomes alcohol, just by a shifting of the bricks. What is it that shifts them? Heat. Electricity. Other things perhaps of which we know nothing. Some of them will shift themselves, and radium becomes lead or uranium becomes radium without our touching them."

"You think, then, that they have an advanced chemistry?"

"I'm sure of it. After all there is no elemental brick which is not ready to their hands. Hydrogen and oxygen come readily from the sea water. There are nitrogen and carbon in those masses of sea vegetation, and there are phosphorus and calcium in the bathybic deposit. With skilful management and adequate knowledge what is there which could not be produced?"

The Doctor had launched upon a chemical

lecture when the door opened and Manda entered, giving us a friendly greeting. There came with him the same old gentleman of venerable appearance whom we had met the night before. He may have had a reputation for learning, for he tried several sentences which were probably different languages upon us, but all were equally unintelligible. Then he shrugged his shoulders and spoke to Manda, who gave an order to the two yellow-clad servants, still waiting at the door. They vanished, but returned presently with a curious screen, supported by two side posts. It was exactly like one of our cinema screens, but it was coated with some sparkling material which glittered and shimmered in the light. This was placed against one of the walls. The old man then paced out very carefully a certain distance, and marked it upon the floor. Standing at this point he turned to Maracot and touched his forehead, pointing to the screen.

"Clean dippy," said Scanlan. "Bats in the belfry."

Maracot shook his head to show that we were nonplussed. So was the old man for a moment. An idea struck him, however, and he pointed to his own figure. Then he turned towards the screen, fixed his eyes upon it, and seemed to concentrate his attention. In an instant a reflection of himself appeared on the screen before us. Then he pointed to us, and a moment later our own little group took the place of his image. It was not particularly like us. Scanlan looked like a comic Chinaman and Maracot like a decayed corpse, but it was clearly meant to be ourselves as we appeared in the eyes of the operator.

"It's a reflection of thought," I cried.

"Exactly," said Maracot. "This is certainly a most marvellous invention, and yet it is but a combination of such telepathy and television as we dimly comprehend upon earth."

"I never thought I'd live to see myself on the movies, if that cheese-faced Chink is really meant for me," said Scanlan. "Say, if we could get all this news to the editor of the *Ledger* he'd cough up enough to keep me for life. We've sure got the goods if we could deliver them."

"That's the trouble," said I. "By George, we could stir the whole world if we could only get back to it. But what is he beckoning about?"

"The old guy wants you to try your hand at it, Doc."

Maracot took the place indicated, and his strong, clear-cut brain focused his picture to perfection. We saw an image of Manda, and then another one of the *Stratford* as we had left her.

Both Manda and the old scientist nodded their great approval at the sight of the ship, and Manda made a sweeping gesture with his hands, pointing first to us and then to the screen.

"To tell them all about it—that's the idea," I cried. "They want to know in pictures who we are, and how we got here."

Maracot nodded to Manda to show that he understood, and had begun to throw an image of our voyage, when Manda held up his hand and stopped him. At an order the attendants removed the screen, and the two Atlanteans beckoned that we should follow them.

IT was a huge building, and we proceeded down corridor after corridor until we came at last to a large hall with seats arranged in tiers like a lecture room. At one side was a broad screen of the same nature as that which we had seen. Facing it there was assembled an audience of at least a thousand people, who set up a murmur of welcome as we entered. They were of both sexes and of all ages, the men dark and bearded, the women beautiful in youth and dignified in age. We had little time to observe them, for we were led to seats in the front row, and Maracot was then placed on a stand opposite the screen, the lights were in some fashion turned down, and he had the signal to begin.

And excellently well he played his part. We first saw our vessel sailing forth from the Thames, and a buzz of excitement went up from the tense audience at this authentic glimpse of a real modern city. Then a map appeared which marked her course. Then was seen the steel shell with its fittings, which was greeted with a murmur of recognition. We saw ourselves once more descending, and reaching the edge of the abyss. Then came the appearance of the monster who had wrecked us. "Marax! Marax!" cried the people, as the beast appeared. It was clear that they had learned to know and to fear it. There was a terrified hush as the creature fumbled with our hawser, and a groan of horror as the wires parted and we dropped into the gulf. In a month of explanation we could not have made our plight so clear as in that half-hour of visible demonstration.

As the audience broke up they showered every sign of sympathy upon us, crowding round us and patting our backs to show that we were welcome. We were presented in turn to some of the chiefs, but the chieftainship seemed to lie in wisdom alone, for all appeared to be on the same social scale, and were dressed in much the same way. The men wore tunics of a saffron colour coming down to the knees, with belts and high boots of a scaly tough material which must have

been the hide of some sea beast. The women were beautifully draped in classical style, their flowing robes of every tint of pink and blue and green, ornamented with clusters of pearl or opalescent sheets of shell. Many of them were lovely beyond any earthly comparison. There was one —but why should I mix my private feelings up with this public narrative? Let me say only that Mona is the only daughter of Scarpa, one of the leaders of the people, and that from that first day of meeting I read in her dark eyes a message of sympathy and of understanding which went home to my heart, as my gratitude and admiration may have gone to hers. I need not say more at present about this exquisite lady. Suffice it that a new and strong influence had come into my life. When I saw Maracot gesticulating with unwonted animation to one kindly lady, while Scanlan stood conveying his admiration in pantomime in the centre of a group of laughing girls, I realized that my companions also had begun to find that there was a lighter side to our tragic position. If we were dead to the world we had at last found a life beyond which promised some compensation for what we had lost.

Later in the day we were guided by Manda and other friends round some portions of the immense building. It had been so embedded in the sea-floor by the accumulations of ages that it was only through the roof that it could be entered, and from this point the passages led down and down until the floor level was reached several hundred feet below the entrance chamber. The floor in turn had been excavated, and we saw in all directions passages which sloped downwards into the bowels of the earth. We were shown the air-making apparatus with the pumps which circulated it through the building. Maracot pointed out with wonder and admiration that not only was the oxygen united with the nitrogen, but that smaller retorts supplied other gases which could only be the argon, neon, and other little-known constituents of the atmosphere which we are only just beginning to understand. The distilling vats for making fresh water and the enormous electrical instalments were other objects of interest, but much of the machinery was so intricate that it was difficult for us to follow the details. I can only say that I saw with my own eyes, and tested with my own palate, that chemicals in gaseous and liquid forms were poured into various machines, that they were treated by heat, by pressure, and by electricity, and that flour, tea, coffee, or wine was collected as the product.

There was one consideration which was very quickly forced upon us by our examination on various occasions of as much of this building as was open to our inspection. This was that the exposure to the sea had been foreseen and the protection against the inrush of the water had been prepared long before the land sank beneath the waves. Of course, it stood to reason, and needed no proof, that such precautions could not have been taken after the event, but we were witnesses now of the signs that the whole great building had from the first been constructed with the one idea of being an enduring ark of refuge. The huge retorts and vats in which the air, the food, the distilled water, and the other necessary

Then came the appearance of the monster who had wrecked us. "Marax! Marax!" cried the people, as the beast appeared.

products were made were all built into the walls, and were evidently integral parts of the original construction. So, too, with the exit chambers, the silica works where the vitrine bells were constructed, and the huge pumps which controlled the water. Every one of these things had been prepared by the skill and the foresight of that wonderful far-away people who seemed, from what we could learn, to have thrown out one arm to Central America and one to Egypt, and so left traces of themselves even upon this earth when their own land went down into the Atlantic. As to these, their descendants, we judged that they had probably degenerated, as was but natural, and that at the most they had been stagnant and only preserved some of the science and knowledge of their ancestors without having the energy to add to it. They possessed wonderful powers and yet seemed to us to be strangely wanting in initiative, and had added nothing to that wonderful legacy which they had inherited. I am sure that Maracot, using this knowledge, would very soon have attained greater results. As to Scanlan, with his quick brain and mechanical skill, he was continually putting in touches which probably seemed as remarkable to them as their powers to us. He had a beloved mouth-organ in his coat-pocket when we made our descent, and his use of this was a perpetual joy to our companions, who sat around in entranced groups, as we might listen to a Mozart, while he handed out to them the crooning coon songs of his native land.

I have said that the whole building was not open to our inspection, and I might give a little further detail upon that subject. There was one well-worn corridor down which we saw folk continually passing, but which was always avoided by our guides in our excursions. As was natural, our curiosity was aroused, and we determined one evening that we would take a chance and do a little exploring upon our own account. We slipped out of our room, therefore, and made our way to the unknown quarter at a time when few people were about.

The passage led us to a high arched door, which appeared to be made of solid gold. When we pushed it open we found ourselves in a huge room, forming a square of not less than two hundred feet. All around the walls were painted with vivid colours and adorned with extraordinary pictures and statues of grotesque creatures with enormous head-dresses, like the full dress regalia of our American Indians. At the end of this great hall there was one huge seated figure, the legs crossed like a Buddha, but with none of the benignity of aspect which is seen on the

Buddha's placid features. On the contrary, this was a creature of Wrath, open-mouthed and fierce-eyed, the latter being red, and their effect exaggerated by two electric lights which shone through them. On his lap was a great dark oven, which we observed, as we approached it, to be filled with ashes.

"Moloch!" said Maracot. "Moloch or Baal—the old god of the Phœnician races."

"Good heavens!" I cried, with recollections of old Carthage before me. "Don't tell me that these gentle folk could go in for human sacrifice."

"Look it here, Bo!" said Scanlan, anxiously. "I hope they keep it in the family, anyhow. We don't want them to pull no such dope on us."

"No, I guess they have learned their lesson," said I. "It's misfortune that teaches folk to have pity for others."

"That's right," Maracot remarked, poking about among the ashes, "it is the old hereditary god, but it is surely a gentler cult. These are burned loaves and the like. But perhaps there was a time——"

But our speculations were interrupted by a stern voice at our elbow, and we found several men in yellow garments and high hats, who were clearly the priests of the Temple. From the expression on their faces I should judge that we were very near to being the last victims to Baal, and one of them had actually drawn a knife from his girdle. With fierce gestures and cries they drove us roughly out of their sacred shrine.

"By gosh!" cried Scanlan. "I'll sock that duck if he keeps crowding me! Look it here, you Bindlestiff, keep your hands off my coat."

For a moment I feared that we should have had what Scanlan called a "rough house" within the sacred precincts. However, we got the angry mechanic away without blows and regained the shelter of our room, but we could tell from the demeanour of Manda and others of our friends that our escapade was known and resented.

BUT there was another shrine which was freely shown to us and which had a very unexpected result, for it opened up a slow and imperfect method of communication between our companions and ourselves. This was a room in the lower quarter of the Temple, with no decorations or distinction save that at one end there stood a statue of ivory yellow with age, representing a woman holding a spear, with an owl perched upon her shoulder. A very old man was the guardian of the room, and in spite of his age it was clear to us that he was of a very different race, and one of a finer, larger type than the men of the Temple. As we stood gazing at the ivory statue, Maracot and I, both wondering where we had seen something like it, the old man addressed us.

"Thea," said he, pointing to the figure.

"By George!" I cried. "He is speaking Greek."

"Thea! Athena!" repeated the man.

There was not a doubt of it. "Goddess—Athena," the words were unmistakable. Maracot, whose wonderful brain had absorbed something from every branch of human knowledge, began at once to ask questions in Classical Greek which were only partly understood and were answered in a dialect so archaic that it was almost incomprehensible. Still, he acquired some knowledge, and he found an intermediary through whom he could dimly convey something to our companions.

"It is a remarkable proof," said Maracot that evening, in his high neighing voice and in the tones of one addressing a large class, "of the reliability of legend. There is always a basis of fact even if in the course of the years it should become distorted. You are aware—or probably you are not aware"—("Bet your life!" from Scanlan)—"that a war was going on between the primitive Greeks and the Atlanteans at the time of the destruction of the great island. The fact is recorded in Solon's description of what he learned from the priests of Sais. We may conjecture that there were Greek prisoners in the hands of the Atlanteans at the time, that some of them were in the service of the Temple, and that they carried their own religion with them. That man was, so far as I could understand, the old hereditary priest of the cult, and perhaps when we know more we shall see something of these ancient people."

"Well, I hand it to them for good sense," said Scanlan. "I guess if you want a plaster god it is better to have a fine woman than that blatherskite with the red eyes and the coal-bunker on his knees."

"Lucky they can't understand your views," I remarked. "If they did you might end up as a Christian martyr."

"Not so long as I can play them jazz," he answered. "I guess they've got used to me now, and they couldn't do without me."

They were a cheerful crowd, and it was a happy life, but there were and are times when one's whole heart goes out to the home lands which we have lost, and visions of the dear old quadrangles of Oxford, or of the ancient elms and the familiar campus of Harvard, came up before my mind. In those early days they seemed as far from me as some landscape in the moon, and only now in a dim uncertain fashion does the hope of seeing them once more begin to grow in my soul.

(To be continued.)

"Every Picture Tells a Story"

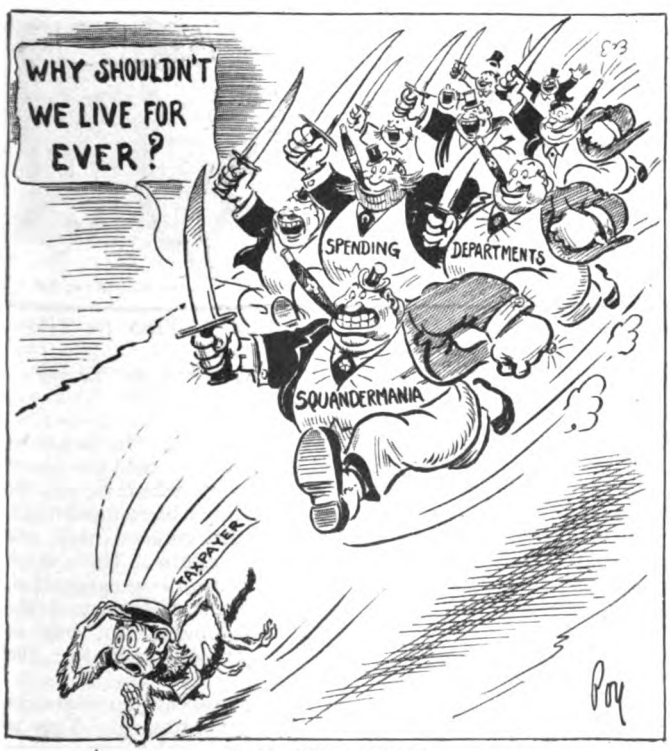
THE ART OF THE NEWSPAPER CARICATURIST

By Sidney Dark

THE photographer supplies the bulk of the illustrations in the modern newspaper, and the Press photographer has few equals in skill, persistence, and enterprise. But photographs are rarely intentionally amusing, and men still love to laugh. The popular Press, therefore, has among its most valuable features humorous pictorial comments on contemporary events, the work of artists necessarily characterized by abundant humour and originality. Perhaps the outstanding genius among the newspaper cartoonists of our time is the Australian, Mr. Will Dyson. But while he was working in London Mr. Dyson's opinions were too advanced and his pictorial comment too savage for average English taste. Of the strength and forcefulness of his work, however, there can be no question.

"POY."
(Mr. P. H. Fearon.)
Photo: Russell.

Mr. Percy Hutton Fearon, far better known as "Poy," is a model of industry. He was born in Shanghai, and, although his parents



MONKEY GLAND.

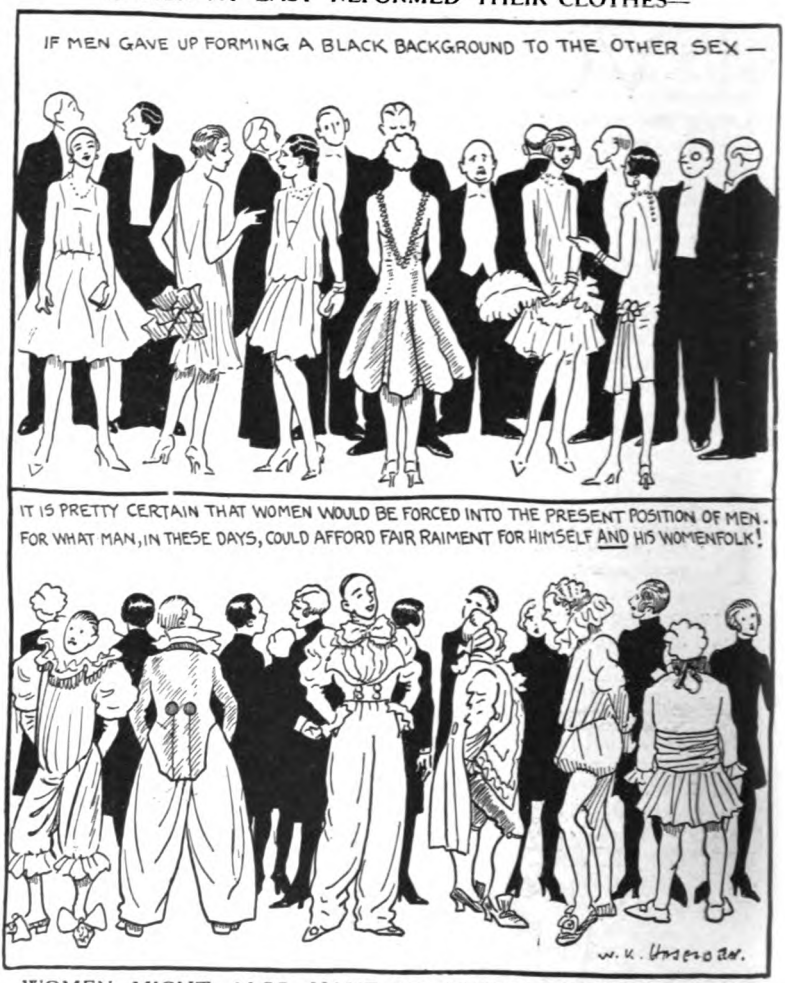
"John Citizen has become familiar to us. We are moved by his woes."

By permission of "The Evening News."

were English, he was brought up in New York. In the dialect of the New York boy, "Percy" invariably becomes "Poicy." His schoolfellows called Mr. Fearon "Poicy" and the abbreviated "Poy," and when he began to draw it was as "Poy" that he signed his name. Mr. Fearon had a very thorough art training. He studied first at the best schools in New York, and when he came to England he went to the famous school that the late Professor Hubert Herkomer ran at Bushey. He began his career as a cartoonist with the Hulton papers in Manchester, and his drawings have now been appearing since the summer of 1913 almost every day in the London *Evening News*. "Poy" is the

Mr. W. K. HASELDEN.
Photo: Schell.

IF MEN AT LAST REFORMED THEIR CLOTHES—



WOMEN MIGHT ALSO HAVE TO REFORM THEIRS IN THE INTERESTS OF ECONOMY.

"W. K. Haselden's little pictures might be described as 'To-day's Good Story.'"

By permission of "The Daily Mirror."

gentlest man who ever made a politician ridiculous. He is quiet in speech and manner, with a face that suggests a mystic rather than a man concerned day after day with Parliament and public affairs. "Poy" had ambitions to be a portrait painter, and his cartoons suggest that he would have outstanding success in that more sedate art. But it is not over-bold to suggest that he is doing the work which he can do best. His cartoons always have movement. He suggests with extraordinary skill the drama of contemporary affairs. There is, of course, always the note of exaggeration, always the over-emphasis necessary if the cartoonist is to make his point, but in "Poy's" work the balance is never lost, the humour is never lacking.

An effective public appeal must always be made with familiar imagery. This is certainly true in England, and I suspect that it is true everywhere else. And the newspaper cartoonist achieves popularity by the ingenious use of the same *dramatis person*

over and over again. We all like to meet old friends; we are all shy of new acquaintances. And "Poy" delights the readers of *The Evening News* with the endless serial story of the tragic adventures of John Citizen. John Citizen has become familiar to us. We are moved by his woes. The sight of his pitiful face is a far more powerful argument against what *The Evening News* calls "squandermania" than all the serious articles written by all the serious political economists, for there is no appeal so powerful as the appeal that is dramatic and pictorial.

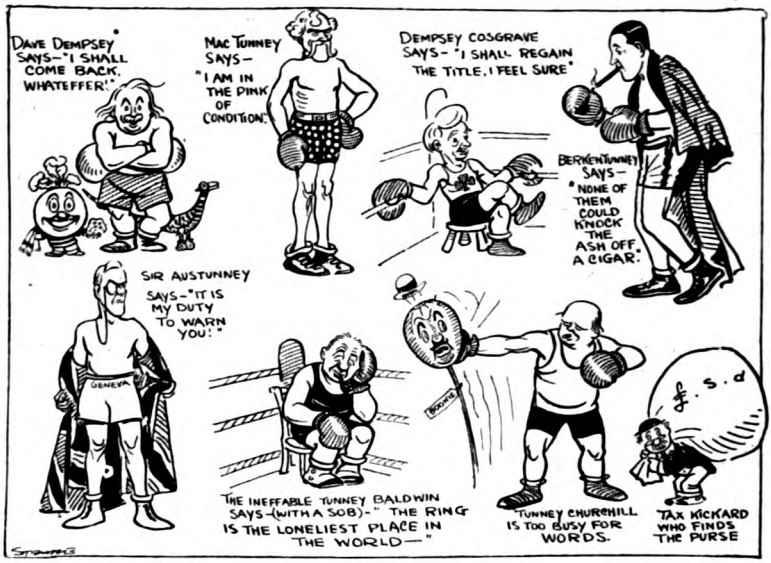
"Poy" obtains a similar result with his two equally familiar figures, "Dilly" and "Dally." With them he brings a vivid picture of the Circumlocution Office into every suburban villa. Who can doubt that the bureaucracy is inefficient and overpaid with Dilly and Dally on the front page of the evening paper? I am not concerned with the correctness of the moral that "Poy" enforces with his admirable pencil, but merely with the supreme skill with which his points are made. And after gossiping with the gentle-voiced, diffident artist, whose favourite recreation is chess, it is rather fun to look at the brutal savagery of his representation of the men who spend our money in the cartoon which he has been good enough to give me for the purposes of this article.

Mr. DAVID LOW.
Photo: Swaine.

Mr. W. K. Haselden, of *The Daily Mirror*, works along lines that are entirely his own. He is unconcerned with public affairs and uninterested in politicians. His six little pictures might be described as "To-day's Good Story." They always have as their subject some topical foible, some topical fashion, or some topical folly. The humour is always admirable, the observation always keen. For practically every day for twenty-three years *The Daily Mirror* has printed Mr. Haselden's work, a record of persistence and industry and inexhaustible imagination that must be something of a record. Mr. Haselden is not to be interviewed. He is, I understand, rarely seen in *The Daily Mirror* office and hardly known to its staff. He goes on quietly with his job, providing the world with its breakfast-table humour.

If *Vanity Fair* were still in existence, and the *Vanity Fair* cartoons were still a national institution, there can be little doubt that nowadays they would be the work of Mr. David Low. Mr. Low is known best for his political cartoons in *The Star* (he now draws for the London *Evening Standard*), but he recently published a series of caricatures in *The New Statesman* which were in effect masterly if not particularly complimentary character studies of well-known personages, work indeed far more acute in observation and satisfying in artistic execution than the *Vanity Fair* cartoons either of

THIS YEAR'S STUFFED PETS.
"Low is concerned with personalities."
By permission of "The Star."



IN THE POLITICAL RING.

"Strube is quite irreverent, so far as the highly-placed are concerned."

By permission of "The Daily Express."

Pellegrini or Leslie Ward. But as Mr. Low very regretfully recognizes, there is no market nowadays for what may perhaps be called the considered pictorial character sketch, the representation of the man not as he thinks he is, or as the photographer sees him, or as his friends see him, but as the artist with his uncanny second sight recognizes that he really is. The great portrait painter equally with the caricaturist possesses eyes that see a great deal more than their sitters want them to see. The hard, gimlet-like eyes, for example, of Sir William Orpen have a power of penetration that is not a little uncomfortable. The consequence is that when the great portrait painter paints a portrait, the sitter often regards it as a caricature. Nevertheless, as Mr. Low insisted to me, though the result may be the same, the caricaturist's method of approach is entirely different. The portrait painter tells the truth as he sees it; the caricaturist exaggerates the truth in order to make salient qualities more obvious.

Mr. Low is a little man with keen eyes, a strong face, and a manner that suggests a very definite point of view. He was born in New Zealand and did his first work for Australian newspapers. There is nothing superficial in his observation of public affairs. He hits with a zest and scores his points with a relish.

Mr. SIDNEY STRUBE.

"Poy's" Parliamentary sketches are admirable, but, as I have suggested, his most effective work is allegorical. Low is concerned with personalities. His work is strong and effective, the line is sure, the art is always admirable, and I doubt whether there has been any contemporary criticism of Mr. Lloyd George more effective than the criticism to be found in Low's sketches. But the ex-Premier bears no malice. "He has a twinkle in his soul," he once said of Mr. Low. He is less concerned with the repetition of familiar figures than "Poy" and other cartoonists, and one quality of his work is its spontaneity. He goes very little to his office. He is very wisely given almost an entirely free hand. He is unhampered by editorial suggestion. And the consequence is that his work, like all art of any value, always suggests the sure dogged personality of the artist himself.

Strube's "Little Man."

Like Topsy, Sidney Strube of *The Daily Express* "just growed." He had no particular art training. He started designing all sorts of odd things for all sorts of odd people and drawing caricatures in his odd moments, and he dropped in, as it were, almost casually at *The Daily Express* office

Mr. A. M. LLOYD.
("News of the World.")

two or three years before the war, and with an interval of military service he has stayed there ever since. He is a modest little man,

THE EXCHEQUER ACROBAT.

Circus-Manager Baldwin: "You'd better remember, Winston, that the audience won't be satisfied unless you can easily make both ends meet."

"Each of Mr. A. M. Lloyd's pictures is a drama"
By permission of "The News of the World."

MEN OF LETTERS.

"Tom Webster has invented the giddy gladiator."
By permission of "The Daily Mail."

entirely unassuming, by no means puffed up by his success, and yet he has attained a fame granted to few people outside the peerage. He is just "Strube" to his hundreds of thousands of admirers, who, if they happen to read this article, will learn for the first time that he actually has another name, presumably given to him by his godfathers and godmothers in Holy Baptism. When Strube began—I can no more write

Mr. TOM WEBSTER.
Photo: Arbuthnot.

"Mr. Strube" than I can write "Mr. Shakespeare"—he drew more or less to order, and he owed not a little to the inexhaustible serio-comic suggestions of Ralph David Blumenfeld, who, although he has been the editor of a London daily for twenty-five years, has never succeeded in taking either English politics or English politicians quite seriously. But Strube's later successes have been entirely his own. He has a shrewd London humour and he realizes exactly the point of view of other shrewd Londoners. That, I think, is his success.

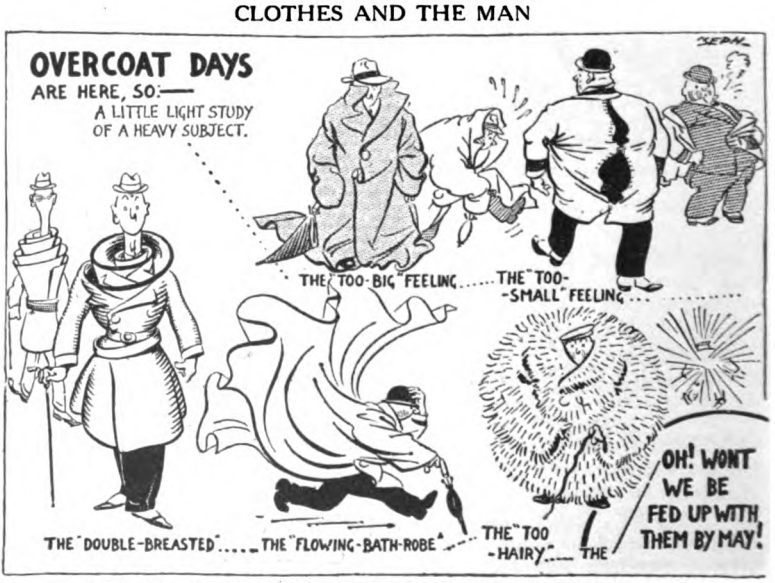
He is quite irreverent, so far as the highly-placed are concerned, and his jokes are those good jokes which everybody can see. There is nothing to me quite so irritating as the subtle joke about which one has to ponder for ten minutes before one begins to laugh. Years ago, when the *Express* was attacking Mr. Lloyd George's land campaign, Strube always drew the statesman attended by a pheasant and a mangel-wurzel. It was excellent fooling—music-hall fooling, if you will—but, as middle-aged people remember regretfully, it was in the old time music-hall that fooling was at its best. More recently Strube has invented the personage whom he refers to affectionately as "my little man," a diminutive, plaintive figure with a large moustache who suffers many things, but has certain compensating adventures. The little man is the type of the admirable citizen who travels to town every morning from a distant suburb, and while Strube makes him a figure of fun there is in him a suggestion of romance that his prototypes find not a little pleasing. Strube is a hard, conscientious worker. All his drawings are done in his office, and he is one of those men always ready in moments of necessity to go outside his own particular work and, in that most expressive and humanitarian phrase, to "lend a hand."

Mr. JOSEPH LEE.

Tom Webster is the most famous of all the newspaper cartoonists, because in England fifty people are interested in sport where only one is interested in politics. Lloyd George may have his thousands, but Jack Hobbs has his tens of thousands, and Dempsey his hundreds of thousands. Until the coming of Tom Webster, however, sport was the most serious thing in the wide world. The mourners at a funeral were almost cheerful, compared with the stern-faced gentlemen who watched professional billiards. Melancholy hovered over cricket grounds, and while other men had seen the fun in bookmakers when, that is, they did not bet with them, no man till Tom Webster had ever seen the fun in a race-horse. Some men can never see a joke. Tom Webster can always see a joke. That is the explanation of his fame.

He is slim and fair and youthful-looking, one of the many celebrities who you never would guess are celebrities unless you were told. As you talk to him he appears just a little tired, as a man might well be who starts out to discover jokes on football fields and humour in ping-pong. Perhaps Tom Webster's greatest achievement was the discovery of Mr. Inman's nose. I cannot claim personal acquaintance with Mr. Inman, but I know that he is a famous billiards player, and

CLOTHES AND THE MAN



"Mr. Lee has, indeed, some of the qualities of Will Dyson."

By permission of 'The Daily Chronicle."

One of Mr. Dyke White's "smile a day cartoons."
By permission of "The Daily Record" of Glasgow.

I read that it is his habit to make breaks of many hundreds. It is obvious that Mr. Inman must be a very serious person with a talent that even Herbert Spencer, who objected to too great proficiency at billiards, might well envy. But Tom Webster, with the genius of the pioneer, discovered a new Mr. Inman, a gentleman with an aggressive nose, and now Mr. Inman is a source of delight to me and to tens of thousands of humble persons whenever he plays ten thousand up, and I am grateful to Mr. Inman and to Tom Webster.

Similarly, horses never struck me as comic animals until Tom Webster introduced me to Tishy, for whom I have conceived as deep an affection as I had in my youth for the Blondin donkey.

Mr. DYKE WHITE.

It is a real achievement to have made the mass of Englishmen laugh at the only thing that they take really seriously. Politicians have been caricatured for generations. So have archdeacons and monarchs, and even financiers. But to laugh at a golfer with a handicap of plus two, at an international half-back, at a cricketer at the head of the batting averages, at a Derby winner, demands a courage that is as rare as it is refreshing. That is the courage that has made Tom Webster's fortune. We have known for generations the gloomy gladiator and even the glorious gladiator. He has invented the giddy gladiator. And that is almost as wonderful a discovery as the much-vaunted achievement of Christopher Columbus.

Mr. A. M. Lloyd, the cartoonist of *The News of the World*, began to draw caricatures while he was an Oxford undergraduate. Some of his early work was seen by Sir Arthur Boscawen, who was a member of his college, and who, impressed by the talent of the drawing and by the fact that Mr. Lloyd seemed unlikely to gain academic distinction, introduced him to the late Sir Arthur Pearson, and Mr. Lloyd began his professional life by drawing cartoons for the Tariff Reform League, with which Arthur Pearson was then intimately associated. Among his colleagues in the office at Victoria Street was Mr. Huskinson, who was then himself a caricaturist, but has since gained fame and fortune as editor of *The Tatler* and *Eve*.

From the Tariff Reform League Mr. Lloyd went to South Africa, where he drew for *The Rand Mail*, the then editor being Mr. Geoffrey Dawson, now editor of *The Times*, and for the Johannesburg *Star*. South Africa was an ideal hunting ground in those days for the caricaturist. The country was

just settling down after the Boer War. Political feeling ran high, and, what was of even greater importance, there were many outstanding personalities and many dramatic moments in South African politics. Mr. Lloyd stayed in Johannesburg for eight years, and came home almost at once to obtain a regular place among the contributors to *Punch*. During the war he was again in Africa, fighting with General Smuts against Von Lettow. A rifle bullet in the side of the head, which has impaired his hearing, brought Mr. Lloyd's military career to an end. Nowadays he illustrates the Parliamentary sketch in *Punch*, and for the last two and a half years has been the cartoonist of *The News of the World*. Mr. Lloyd spends one hour a week in the Gallery of the House of Commons when Parliament is sitting. But he finds the Gallery a bad place for the caricaturist. It is easier from there to see the tops of legislators' heads than their features, and he tells me that he gets much more effective impressions in the Lobby, and particularly from the shrewd descriptions of members from those wonderful persons, the Lobby policemen. In his cartoons Mr. Lloyd never attempts caricature. Each of his pictures is a drama. He summarizes situations, of course, with humour, but also with an acute appreciation of the factors of the political situations. His cartoons are part at least of the political history of the week.

Mr. Lloyd is a tall man, with the manner and appearance of the soldier, very diffident, not easily induced to talk about himself or his work, and full of appreciation for the skill of his fellows. His passion is for foreign travel, and he makes long Continental treks in his car when Parliament is not sitting.

Mr. Joseph Lee, the cartoonist of *The Daily Chronicle*, is, I imagine, the youngest of the men of his craft who have now an established reputation. He did a daily cartoon for *The Pall Mall Gazette* for about eighteen months. When a tragedy of journalism occurred and that paper with its great history died, Mr. Lee went to Liverpool, where he drew for *The Daily Courier*. He returned to London to join *The Sunday Express*, for which he drew a weekly cartoon for some time, and went on to the staff of *The Daily Chronicle* in 1926. Mr. Lee's work is very strong. He has, indeed, something of the qualities of Will Dyson. There is not much suggestion of humour in his pictorial comments on affairs, but rather a fierce and perhaps impatient presentation. He draws admirably well, and he is obviously only at the beginning of what should be a most interesting career.

One of the most accomplished of the provincial caricaturists is Mr. Dyke White, of *The Glasgow Daily Record*. He was a student at the Glasgow School of Art, where, he says, for the usual period of years he learned "to apply perfectly good paint to dazzling white six-foot canvases in the endeavour to portray every conceivable shape and colour of the human form." Then Mr. White discovered that a humorous sketch on a half-sheet of notepaper was a far more saleable commodity than a six-foot canvas covered by good paint. His half-sheets of notepaper brought him cheques and requests for more, and he decided to apply himself to the serious endeavour to be humorous. His drawings have appeared in practically every illustrated paper in Great Britain. Shortly after the end of the war he received an invitation from a South African syndicate to go out to the Cape, where he worked for three years, and, as he has told me, "attired in a pith helmet and pyjamas and fortified by iced skokiaan, I broadcast cartoons from rocky kopjes and sun-baked karoo."

Mr. White returned home to join *The Glasgow Daily Record*, to which he now contributes a "smile a day cartoon." Asked for his methods of work, he replied: "Well, first catch your idea, then jug him." Mr. Dyke White is a humorist. He sees the fun of life, which is perhaps why he is such a great success in Glasgow.

The Humanising of the Bishop

By

EDGAR JEPSON

Illustrated by
J. DEWAR MILLS

BRUISED and beaten, the Bishop clung to the sand, lest the wind should blow him across the island out to sea again, and wished that he had entered his diocese, if it was his diocese, in a less undignified manner and with more clothes on.

The nightmarish events before that entry were still disjointed visions in his confused mind: the crash that had been followed by his swoop across the cabin; the bang with which he had fetched up against the opposite wall; the panic-stricken steward who had howled to him to dress; the second panic-stricken steward who had dragged him, clad only in his pyjamas and a sock, to the deck of the foundering steamer; the journey in a boat, buffeted by the wind and lashed by the spray of waves whose hugeness in that darkness was rather an impression than actually perceived; the screaming, so thin through the roar, of the children; the upsetting of the boat; the utter, breathless helplessness in the grip of those hammering waves; the being rolled over and over on the sand in the shallows; the struggle out of the clutches of the sea.

Slowly he recovered his breath, and then became aware that he was lying on a row of pebbles and that they were hurting his chest. Shifting his body to one side, clear of them, he found that they were the buttons of a gaiter. That it should be there did not seem to him so very odd; the Church was his one absorbing thought; in his surprise and confusion he had instinctively caught up a garment which was also a badge of his ecclesiastical dignity. He wished that he had instinctively caught up his breeches.

He grasped the gaiter and began to crawl inland; forty yards farther on he bumped his head, not hard, against the trunk of a tree; groping, he found other tree-trunks. Two minutes later he crawled into a hollow. The wind roared above him, but he was out of it. In an immense relief and thankfulness he stretched himself out at full length and relaxed. In three minutes he was asleep.

He awoke in the bright light of the tropical dawn, to find a light breeze blowing over a settling sea. Also he awoke stiff, hungry, and very thirsty. He sat up, surprised to find himself on land and in such light attire; then the memories of the night before came rushing back.

He saw the gaiter and picked it up, and came out of the clump of coco-nut palms to see, ten yards away, a woman in a white frock. He shivered a little. That was the effect the sudden sight of a woman always had on him—not quite a painful effect, but uncomfortable. As a man he did not like women; as a Churchman he was one of the most eloquent and violent advocates of the celibacy of the clergy that the Anglican Church had ever known.

Then he saw that the woman was drinking the milk out of a coco-nut in which she had knocked a hole with a stone. He stepped forward hastily and thirstily to find a coco-

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nut for himself, and remembered his light attire; he was slinking back into the clump when she turned and saw his vanishing back.

"What a relief! I thought we were all drowned!" she cried, in warmly thankful accents.

There was nothing for it; blushing painfully, he came out into the open to find that she was Mrs. Lissington, the young widow who had sat opposite to him at the captain's table, of whose cigarettes, clothes, and conversation he had so strongly disapproved.

"Oh, it's you, Bishop?" she said, and

"Oh, it's you, Bishop?" she said.
"Yes," said the Bishop, stiffly.

a less earnest man would have observed that much of the thankfulness at finding a companion in misfortune had passed from her voice.

"Yes," said the Bishop, stiffly.

"There doesn't seem to be anyone else saved," she said, ruefully. "What are we going to do?"

She did not seem to be aware of anything unusual in her attire or that of the Bishop, but he was uncomfortably aware that she was without shoes and stockings.

He expected to find, lying about, neat brown coco-nuts, of the kind he had seen in shops. With very small toes she touched a cluster of large green objects that lay between them, and told him that, since they had no knife with which to strip it, he must find a coco-nut the outer husk of which had been split by its fall. In helpless fashion he hunted for one under several trees. With a rather contemptuous air she moved about five feet and found him two. Before she could stop him he had broken the first with

He could not tell her what they were going to do; he did not know; he said: "I'm very thirsty. I should like some coco-nut milk," and looked about him rather helplessly.

a small boulder that smashed it to pieces and wasted the milk; to the second he took a smaller stone, and at the first shot caught his thumb-nail a crack that caused him to

drop the coco-nut, say "Bother!" with immense vehemence, and put his thumb in his mouth. She took the stone from him, knocked in a neat hole between the eyes of the coco-nut, and handed it to him.

Then she looked at him thoughtfully, plainly weighed him, and, much to his distaste, found him wanting, took the matter into her own hands, and said: "We must get off this beach into the shade of the wood before the sun gets up. We shall be scorched here. And we'd better take some coco-nuts with us, though probably we shall find something else to eat in that wood. We must have the milk to drink."

"But surely we shall find people. The island must be inhabited," he protested.

"It isn't," she said, positively. "I feel in my bones it isn't. About five minutes ago a gull let me pick him up and stroke him."

She hunted for coco-nuts through the clump of trees which had been nearly stripped by the storm, and found seven, then she picked up her vanity bag and led the way towards the wood which covered the sides of the cone-shaped hill, about six hundred feet high, which formed the centre of the island.

The Bishop followed her gloomily. He felt that he ought to be pleased that he had a companion who had ideas about how to handle the situation, since he had none himself, but he still took it hard that that companion should be a woman.

When they came to the edge of the wood she stopped, looked into it with suspicious eyes, and said: "There may be something in it. You go first."

A HUNDRED yards from the top of the hill the trees ceased, and Mrs. Lissington and the Bishop climbed over rough and crumbling rock on to the rim of the crater of an extinct volcano. The sea was empty. They turned and looked down into the crater. It was a basin, about a quarter of a mile across, and in the middle of it was a small lake. Cliffs a hundred feet high formed its sides, and here and there were fissures in them, affording more or less easy descent to its floor. At the foot of the cliffs was a belt of vegetation about forty yards deep, trees and shrubs and herbs.

"There's water, at any rate, and plenty of it," said Mrs. Lissington, in a tone of satisfaction.

"A drink of it would be very refreshing," said the Bishop, looking at the lake thirstily.

They moved round the rim to the first fissure that afforded an easy descent into the basin, and over the rough, crumbling rock to the little lake. The still water was very clear; they found it sweet and, indeed, refreshing.

Mrs. Lissington rose from drinking, looked round, and said thoughtfully: "I should think we'd better stay in this crater. If there's anything but coco-nuts to eat on this island we shall find it among those trees. But the first thing to do is to make myself some shoes, if I'm to have any soles on my feet."

On the shores of the lake only a few coco-nut palms grew. She walked to the nearest, sat down, and took from her hand-bag a pair of nail-scissors. She got to work, binding on her feet strips of dried husk with strands of the fibre. Then she asked him whether he had brought anything ashore in the pockets of his pyjama jacket.

"Only my glasses—the glasses I use for reading," he said, gloomily. "And a handkerchief."

"We may be able to light a fire with those glasses if ever we find anything to cook and something to cook it in," she said, not hopefully.

He watched her for a few minutes, then moved a few yards away and began to bind up his own feet. He made a much poorer job of it.

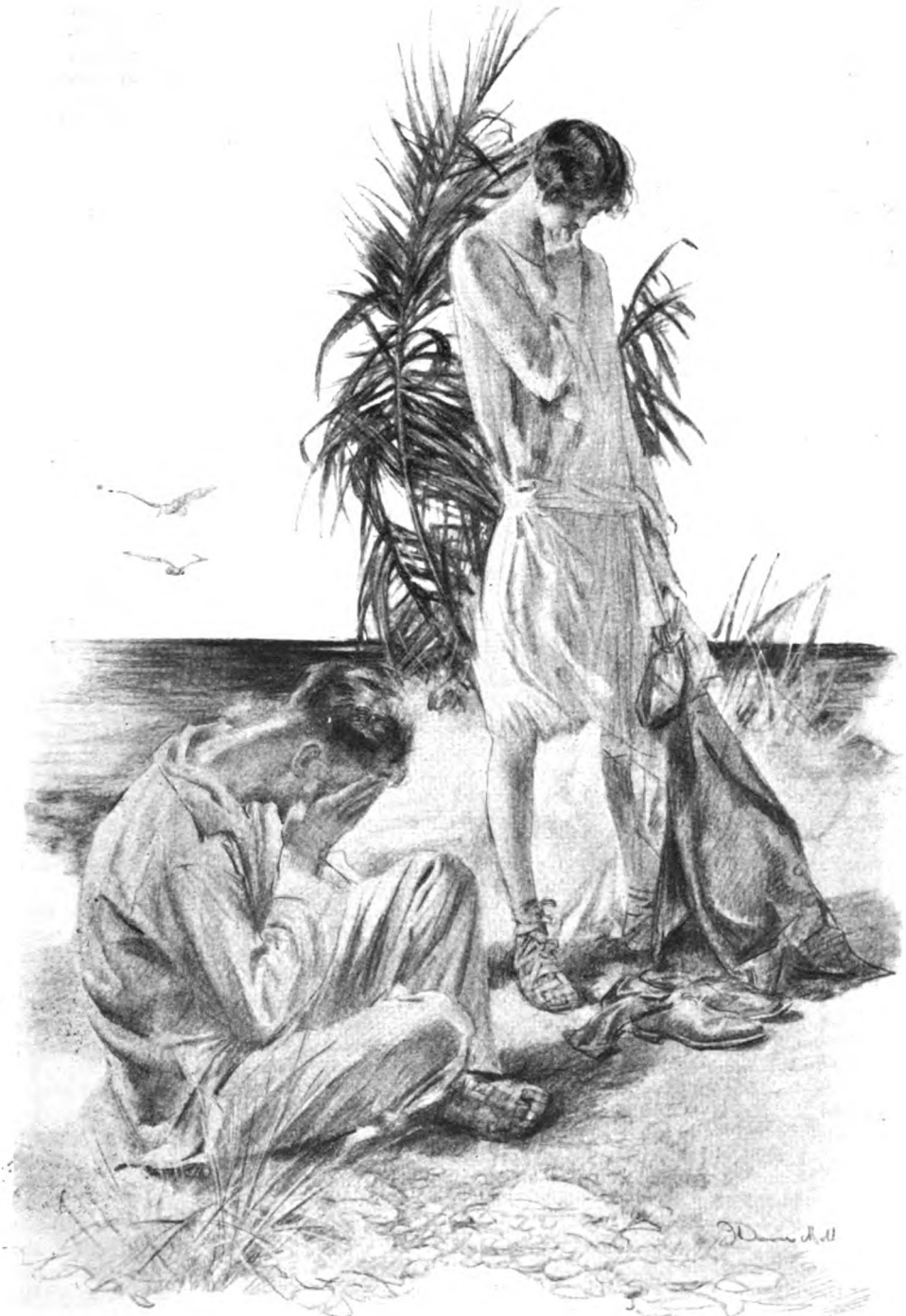
Thus shod, they went into the belt of vegetation at the foot of the cliffs and began to explore it. Presently they came upon a patch of plantains, loaded with fruit, and made a meal.

Half-way round the basin they came to a broad fissure in the cliff affording an easy access to the crater's rim. He said that they must go up to see if there was a ship in sight. The sea was empty. Half a mile away on the edge of the sea was a flock of gulls in the air, or on the sand round a dark object.

"Look! A drowned man—a sailor, or he wouldn't be in dark clothes. He may have a knife on him. Come along!" she cried.

In spite of the heat and their clumsy foot-coverings they hurried down the hill. The gulls round the drowned man paid no heed to them. Twenty yards away Mrs. Lissington stopped short and bade the Bishop strip the drowned sailor of everything he had.

The Bishop went forward to do her bidding, but at the sight of the gulls' work he stopped short; then, sickened, he got to his task. All the while he had to keep beating off the fearless and greedy gulls. He could not bring himself to strip off the trousers and vest because of them, but he came away with the jacket, the shirt, the socks, and the shoes. He came pale and looking sick, and dropped the garments and shoes at her feet, and sat down on the ground and buried his face in his hands.



The Bishop sat down and buried his face in his hands.

She picked up the garments and waited sympathetically for him to recover. Presently he rose; they climbed up the hill and down into the shade of the trees in the basin. Then, with an easier mind, now that she was so far from the dead man, she began to search the pockets of the dead man's clothes. The side pockets of the jacket were large, and out of the first she took a big clasp-knife.

"This is what we wanted above everything," she said, joyfully.

Then she took out a thick chunk of plug tobacco and a pipe, and raised the tobacco to her nose and took a long, wistful sniff at it and said that she was missing her cigarettes dreadfully. The Bishop frowned. Further search produced: item, a large red silk bandanna handkerchief; item, an oiled silk tobacco pouch, and among the cut tobacco in it seven pound notes and a book of matches as dry as a bone; item, a large hussif well stocked with needles, cotton, and thread; item, two hair-pins; item, sodden, "The Gipsy Queen's Book of Dreams."

At the sight of the matches the Bishop's face had brightened, and he said: "Now we shall be able to light beacons—at night. There's plenty of dry wood about."

"We mustn't use more than one a week," she said, firmly, and put them into her vanity bag.

She made a really becoming turban of the bandanna; then she looked from the sailor's shoes to the Bishop's feet.

"They're much too small for you and much too large for me, but I can get into them, and they'll be a bit less clumsy than these coco-nut things," she said, and padded them with grass and put them on. Then she stamped on the ground and added ruefully: "I hate to admit it, but they're not so much too large for me after all."

The Bishop frowned; his austere face assumed an expression of almost forbidding austerity; vanity—foolish vanity on a desert island.

The full heat of the day was on them; they drew into the thickest shade under the cliff. She pulled off the shoes, pillowed her head on the jacket, and presently fell asleep. The Bishop lay about fifteen feet away, pondering sombrely: this was a very painful affair. Here he was, buried on a desert island, probably for months; it might be for years. All the while the Church in the Palaman Islands, by far the largest and most important diocese in Polynesia, would be suffering for lack of his organizing powers.

At intervals the Bishop looked at his unwelcome companion. Of course, with the inveterate levity of her sex, she was sleeping in an utter carelessness of their dismal plight. He blinked drowsily. Then he found himself looking at her toes and thinking how very small they were. Angrily he averted his eyes and returned to the consideration of the details of that organization. Presently he too fell asleep.

About two hours later he was awakened by her prodding him in the ribs with her toe. It seemed to him to show a lack of respect. She said that she was hungry and that they were a long way from the patch of plantains, where they had left their coco-nuts. The Bishop found that he also was hungry, and rose gloomily. It was a long three hundred yards in that heat. They ate plantains and drank the milk of a coco-nut. During the meal she expressed a hope that a vegetarian diet would not turn her nose red. The Bishop frowned; vanity again—vanity on a desert island.

THE slow hours ebbed away; twice he mounted to the rim of the crater. At half-past four, now that the sun was down the sky, she rose and said that they must be getting to work.

"We ought to find calabashes and bread-fruit trees and wild yams, if only we knew where to dig for them, and sweet potatoes," she said. "But the first thing to do is to fix up a place to sleep in to-night."

The Bishop said, coldly and firmly: "The first thing to do is to collect dry wood and make a beacon on the rim of the crater to light as soon as it grows dark."

"You'll find plenty of wood," she said, dryly. "But I'm going to find a lair that I can make a bed in."

With that she left him and began to explore the foot of the cliff. She was not long finding an overhanging ledge about six feet from the ground, and she was not long making a thick bed of leaves under it. Now and then she saw the Bishop ascending the fissure to the rim of the crater with a load of dry wood on his shoulder.

When she had made her bed she went to him and said that they would now explore the resources of the island. The Bishop objected that his task was far more important; but after a short discussion he found himself irritated but exploring the resources of the island.

They found more plantains and guavas; but for him exploring the resources of the island chiefly meant digging for yams with the knife. He was very tired of digging when at last he did dig up a yam, a horn yam about eighteen inches long. He dug up seven more; presently they returned with them to the patch of plantains, and she said that now he might have a match for his beacon, since there were yams to cook in

the ashes of it. He had a strong and unpleasing impression that, had they not found the yams, there would have been no match for the beacon.

There was still half an hour of light, and he carried up several more loads of dry wood. When the sun set and the sudden darkness came down she lit the fire herself, for she would not trust him to light it with a single match. It was a splendid fire, but the Bishop was distressed by the quickness with which it burnt itself out. He was too tired to keep it going with fresh wood. It was a long while after it had burned down before its ashes were ready for the yams, and even then the Bishop roasted himself, thrusting them in among them with a long stick. By the time they were baked he was dead beat; he had hardly the strength to get to the lake to refresh himself with a drink and a bathe. He slept that night as he had never slept before, on a bed of leaves about twenty yards from that of Mrs. Lissington.

HE awoke next morning stiff and aching, but in the enjoyment of an appetite strange to him at that hour. He stretched himself and rose and looked about him and down at the lake. In it he saw Mrs. Lissington, swimming lazily in a diaphanous garment. Hastily he averted his eyes, and mounted to the rim of the crater in a great hope that he would see a ship, drawn thither by the beacon fire, sailing to the island. The sea was empty. Presently he saw Mrs. Lissington coming up from the lake, and descended. She had brought four coco-nuts with her, and said that the water was delightful. They got to their breakfast of plantains, yams, and coco-nut milk—a simple meal, but how the Bishop did enjoy it!

They talked little, for neither the island nor the prospect of escape gave them much to talk about.

Towards the end of the meal she said, thoughtfully: "It looks as if your beard will grow quickly."

The Bishop clapped his hand to his bristly chin. He had not thought about his beard.

"It will suit you quite well," she went on; then added, in explanatory accents: "Your chin, you know."

The Bishop took his chin between his thumb and first finger and felt it carefully. It seemed to him a good chin.

"What's the matter with my chin?" he said.

"Nothing. It's a very good chin," she said, a little too hastily.

The Bishop looked at her suspiciously. Was it merely levity again? Again he felt his chin; perhaps it was a little pointed.

They drowsed away the heat of the day. But between sunrise and sunset, during the heat and the cool, the Bishop climbed to the rim of the crater to look for a ship at least ten times. At about half-past four, when the sun was down the sky, they got to their work again and worked till the quick darkness came down. Presently the moon rose and they made their evening meal by its light. After it they took their mats up to the rim of the crater and sat looking across the sea. They talked little; they had so few common subjects.

That was the pattern of their days. Slowly they explored all the island; they drowsed through the heat; they worked in the morning and the evening. But hot or cool the Bishop might have been alone on the island, so little was he aware of the presence of Mrs. Lissington.

She took no more interest in him than he did in her. She had been used to wholly different men, men interested in life and the affairs of the world, politics, diplomacy, women, sport, gambling. She had loved her husband, and his death two years before had been a blow from which she had not even yet quite recovered. In the last year she had been finding relief in the fast section of the polite world, but, her nerves having proved unequal to the strain, her doctor had prescribed a sea voyage, and she was making the return trip to the Palaman Islands in the ill-fated *Cappadocia*. Her placidity formed a strong contrast to the usually disgruntled air of the Bishop.

This air of his at times annoyed Mrs. Lissington. But she observed that the painfully simple life they were leading was doing him a world of good; at the end of ten days his skin was clear, his eyes were brighter, his stride was longer and firmer, his stoop was straightening out. It was in the third week she perceived that the atmosphere of the island was beginning to soothe him; he no longer climbed up to the rim of the crater to look for ships more than five times in the whole day; he no longer worked with the same excessive energy during the cool hours. Yes; the island life was telling upon him as it was telling upon her; her nerves were nearly repaired, and she was feeling fitter than she had felt for years. For the most part he tolerated her civilly, but now and again he would grumble at her refusal to let him have more than one of their precious matches a week for the beacon fire.

By the end of the fourth week the Bishop had lapsed to the point of climbing to the rim of the crater only twice during the heat of the day, and that he did with manifest

reluctance. He showed himself also more aware of her presence; he talked to her. She found it better than listening to a sermon in a church, because she could argue and protest.

One day she said idly: "Of course, what you are is the modern Savonarola."

Taken aback, he protested: "I'm afraid you have been misunderstanding me entirely. Savonarola was a foe of the Church."

"Oh, no—not really," she said, firmly. "He only suffered, just like you, from too much zeal. If you'd been alive in those days and gone on as you do, you'd have been burnt too. It was the only way they had of getting rid of people who were a nuisance. Nowadays they get rid of you by making you a Colonial Bishop."

He stared at her blankly. Certain facts began to come back to him—gentle remonstrances and less gentle remonstrances from ecclesiastical superiors for many years, remonstrances that had increased in number as the controversies which he had started, or into which he had flung himself, had grown more frequent and more violent. Then he remembered the manner in which the see of the Palaman Islands had been pressed on him, the number of dignitaries of the Church who had made it their business to see him to point out the extreme importance of that see in the structure of the Church, to discuss its parlous condition, to assure him that he was the only man available who could make it what it should be, the number of dignitaries of the Church who had written to him to the same effect. They had worn down his resistance to the idea of leaving England by convincing him that it was his duty to the Church to accept the bishopric, and he had accepted it.

HE had discarded his coco-nut foot-coverings because they kept his feet insufferably hot, and after watching her plait mats and baskets of grass he plaited small grass mats and tied them round his feet. Though more comfortable, they were a poor protection, but his feet were harder. Then, as they were strolling one evening to the guava trees in hope to find the fruit ripe, a long thorn ran into his left foot. He pulled it out, but refused, somewhat testily, to wrap her handkerchief round the wound, though she told him that there might be tetanus germs in the soil. Tetanus germs did not find their way into the wound, but some other germs did, and in three days it festered and rendered him helpless.

The burden of both their lives fell on her. She fed him and she nursed him. For the first time the Bishop won some respect from her by showing himself a good patient. He never complained, he never winced when she dressed his wound. There was indeed no little of the Spartan about him, and she liked it. He began to talk to her from a less lofty height.

For her part the having had him helpless in her hands insensibly changed her feelings about him; it awoke her interest in him as hardly anything else could have done; it awoke in her the desire to know him. She led him on to talk about himself, his early life, his tastes, his desires other than his ruling ambition.

To her surprise he responded almost from the beginning. In all his life no one had ever taken a keen personal interest in him, for he had been an orphan and not of a temperament to excite warm affection in the cousins who had brought him up. He had been a lonely child; and neither at Winchester nor Oxford had he made a really intimate friend. It seemed only natural that the Church should fill his life.

At first he was shy of telling her about himself. But, without knowing it, he was flattered by her interest in him, and as that interest grew manifestly keener the flattery grew sweeter, while she found his slow but quickening response no less flattering. So either fed the other's vanity.

Naturally she talked at times about her own life and her friends and acquaintances, their successes and misfortunes, their virtues and their frailties. He was hard on their frailties, and his judgments on them were those of a man immune from temptation, unable to appreciate its strength. Being rather of the opinion that to know everything is to forgive everything, she would protest against those judgments. But he could find no excuse for their misdoings; their duty had been plain; temptation only comes to us to be resisted.

"That's all very well," she said. "Wait till you're tempted."

"I shall never be tempted in those ways," he said, confidently.

"You're very sure," she said. "But wait till you fall in love. I shall be interested to see what happens to the celibacy of the clergy then."

"I have never fallen in love and I never shall. I'm past the age for it," he said, with yet greater conviction.

She laughed gently, and then she looked at him more closely. For the first time she saw that he was looking uncommonly handsome; his tanned skin was very clear; his eyes seemed to have grown bluer; he wore a rather lazy air that she found attractive. In some curious fashion, though he had lost his hard austerity, he looked more of a man. She had a fancy that, could she see it, she would find that under his beard

his chin had grown squarer and less pointed.

A FEW days later she bethought herself to count the matches, and found that they had used eleven. This was indeed distressing. They debated the matter.

Then she became thoughtful, and presently said: "Those glasses you brought ashore with you, are they strong?"

"Not very," he said.

She said that they might as well try them, and he fetched them from his sleeping place. She gathered some dry leaves and grass and tried to use the glasses as burning glasses, but they were not strong enough. Then she said that since he had nothing to read they were of no use to him, and broke the bridge. For some minutes she manipulated the two lenses, trying to get them at an angle that gave them their greatest magnifying power. Few people could have watched an operation like that without itching to try it themselves. The Bishop was one of them; he had no desire to try it himself. But he watched her hands, and of a sudden perceived that they were beautiful, small, firm, admirably shaped; and then he perceived that they were rather pathetic—browned by the sun, none too clean from lack of soap, still roughened by the work she had done when the whole burden of their life had fallen on her. He stared at them.

Then she found the right distance at which to hold the glasses apart at the right angle to the sun; the leaf shrivelled and smoked, a tiny flame burst from it, the leaves round it caught fire. With a little cry of triumph she set down the lenses and gently dropped handful after handful of leaves on those that were burning, and handfuls of small twigs on those. At her sharp command the Bishop bestirred himself to bring bigger dried sticks, and in a few minutes they had a good fire burning.

"And that's that," she said, in a tone of great satisfaction. "We're independent of matches now, and you can have as many beacon fires as you like."

"You are surprisingly intelligent," he said, with thoughtful conviction.

"Thank you so much," she said, smiling at him.

They moved away from the fire and sat down out of the range of its heat. She talked fitfully; the Bishop seemed disinclined to talk; he looked at her hands. Then, with the air of a man under an irresistible impulsion and not quite knowing what he was doing, he bent forward and stroked her left hand. Mrs. Lissington did not stir; she looked at the two hands, and her lips parted a little.

Of a sudden the Bishop seemed to awake. Hastily he withdrew his hand; an expression of horror filled his face; he said, in accents of dismay: "I—I beg your pardon! I—I can't think what I was thinking of! They looked—they looked—so pathetic!"

"They *are* rough, and they do want cold cream," she said, lightly.

A few days later, one afternoon when he had fallen asleep, she was annoyed and a little disturbed to find herself looking at his hand and wishing that he would stroke hers again. It was a good hand, she thought, of the right size for his height, well shaped and strong, the hand of a man of action. Once more she considered his face carefully. Yes: the lines of it had softened; much of the hardness had gone from it; yet it seemed to her that its going had in some odd manner made it stronger. He looked so much more a man who could get his own way, so much more a man a woman could rely on.

ABOUT a week later she had proof that her nerves had fallen into their natural, wonted rhythm; as she lay wakeful one night there came upon her a strong desire to cry; she did cry—luxuriously. Nevertheless she awoke next morning with a troubled mind. She did not look at the Bishop much or carefully that day; twice she was short with him. He seemed more than a little bewildered by it.

That night they had sat silent on the rim of the crater for a long time when she said, almost petulantly: "I do wish a ship would come."

"Yes," he said, thoughtfully. "But I'm not nearly so impatient for its coming as I was."

She looked at him sharply, and said even more petulantly: "For goodness' sake, don't get patient! Patience is a woman's virtue. It has to be."

"It is also the virtue of the strong man," he said, sententiously.

"I should never have thought it had been yours," she said, in captious accents.

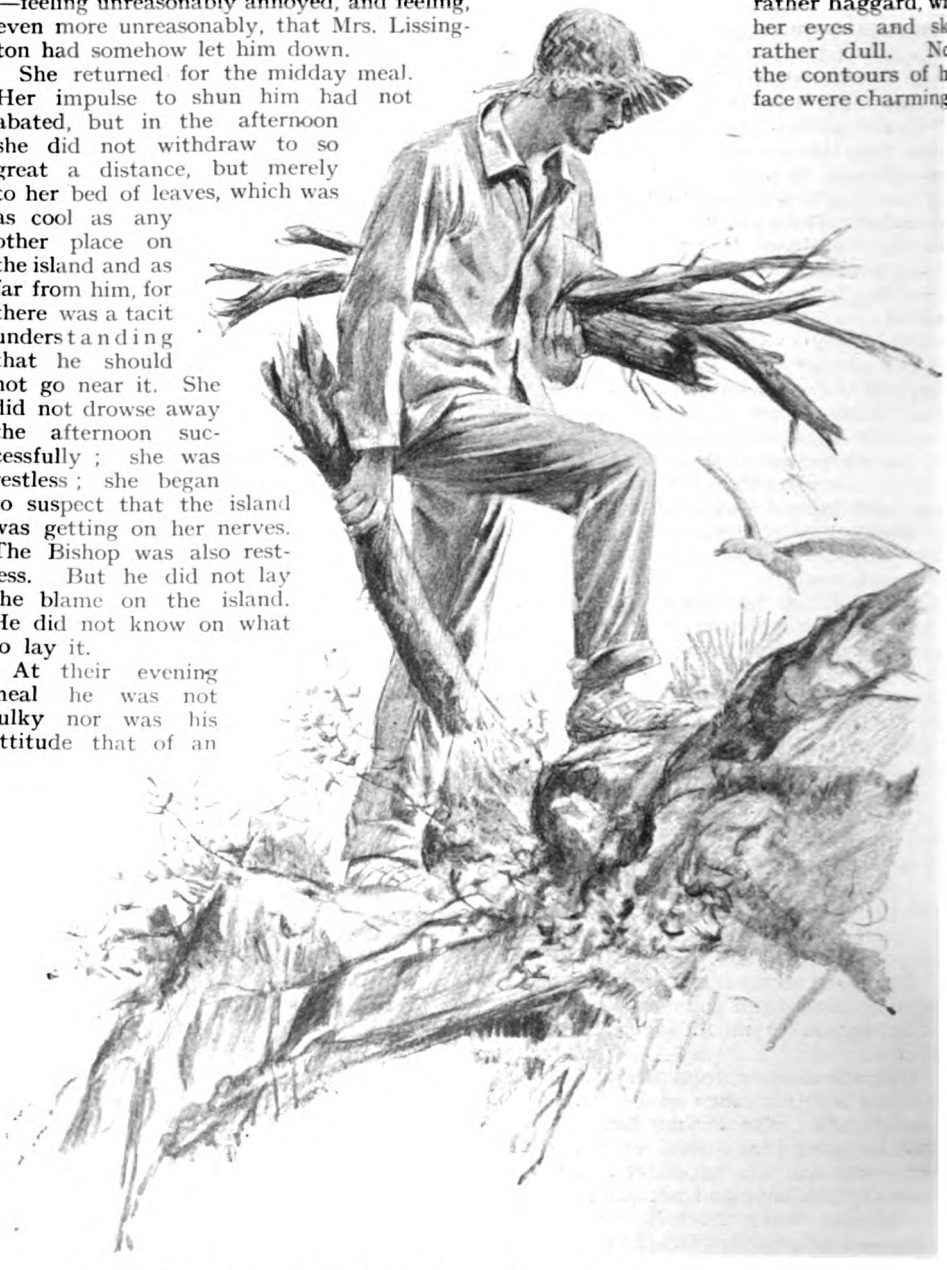
"It hasn't been. But this long rest I've had has made a great difference to me," he said, thoughtfully. "I think that my nerves were very often on edge."

The next day she found herself still captious, for no reason that she could think of, and an odd impulse came to her to shun him—to get away from him. She acted on it. Just before the heat of the day came on them she slipped away into the belt of trees along the foot of the cliffs. It was some time before he missed her; then he rose and began to look for her. Presently he saw her halfway round the crater, plucking guavas and eating them. Well, he might as well join Mrs. Lissington and eat guavas. He set

out briskly, considering the heat, keeping in the shade. But when he came to the guava patch she was not in it, and he could not see her anywhere. With a good appetite, but listlessly, he ate half-a-dozen guavas, then searched for her. But he did not find her, and presently returned home—they had fallen into the habit of calling the corner of the basin in which they ate and slept, home—feeling unreasonably annoyed, and feeling, even more unreasonably, that Mrs. Lissington had somehow let him down.

She returned for the midday meal. Her impulse to shun him had not abated, but in the afternoon she did not withdraw to so great a distance, but merely to her bed of leaves, which was as cool as any other place on the island and as far from him, for there was a tacit understanding that he should not go near it. She did not drowse away the afternoon successfully; she was restless; she began to suspect that the island was getting on her nerves. The Bishop was also restless. But he did not lay the blame on the island. He did not know on what to lay it.

At their evening meal he was not sulky nor was his attitude that of an important dignitary of the Church; it was rather humble. Mrs. Lissington was somewhat spiritless and inclined to be captious; she did not seem interested in him or in the subjects he broached. In the middle of the meal he made a discovery; he discovered that she had changed. She had landed on the island thin and palish and rather haggard, with her eyes and skin rather dull. Now the contours of her face were charmingly



At her sharp command the Bishop bestirred himself to bring bigger dried sticks.

rounded, her tanned skin was clear, her eyes bright. For the first time he perceived also that they were beautiful eyes, violet and of a depth. Since his eyes had fallen into the way of not resting on women, the beauty of her eyes and face made the deeper impression on him now that he did see them. He did not inform her of this discovery; but he did find his eyes often drawn to her, and often he removed his gaze from her hastily lest he should seem to stare.

It was quite late in the meal that he remembered that woman is a snare of the devil, and that the more beautiful the woman the more dangerous the snare. It occurred to him that St. Jerome might possibly be speaking without an exhaustive knowledge of the subject; and certainly anything less like a snare than Mrs. Lissington he had never seen; he was sure that she was as harmless a creature as he had ever met. At any rate, she had never shown any sign whatever of desiring to ensnare him.

Her conduct during the next few days strengthened this conviction. The impulse to shun him was still strong, and she could not account for it, for he was as harmless a creature as she had ever met. That stroking her hand had been the act of an impulsive child and meant nothing. It must be some unreasonable, subconscious prompting that urged her to shun him. Whatever it was, she acted on it, and he saw very little of her except at meals; during the heat of the day and now in the evenings she disappeared.

She did not only shun him; her attitude when they were together pained him. For a long while she had been indifferent; she had become friendly; but now she was captious, almost harsh, with him. Had he been the man he was when he landed on the island, he would have been now and again inclined to rebuke her for a lack of respect to a dignitary of the Church, but in some odd way he had become less conscious of being a dignitary of the Church. The fact did not seem relevant.

ON the evening of the fourth day of her shunning him they had finished their evening meal, and the sun was about to dip quickly into the sea. They rose, and she turned away, once more about to disappear.

"Won't you come up on to the rim of the crater and sit by the beacon?" said the Bishop, and his voice had no note of episcopal authority in it.

"We're independent of matches now," she said, "and you can have as many fires as you like."

Listlessly she said "yes," and with a listless air she came. He set the two mats they had carried up close beside one another, and they sat down. She let him do the talking. He did not talk much. The sun dipped with the usual local suddenness; half an hour later the stars were shining brightly.

"It's astonishing how attractive I'm beginning to find the stars," he said. "I never used to take any notice of them."

"'The brilliant leprosy of Heaven,'" she quoted, captiously.

"Oh, no! No!" he said, as if the phrase hurt him.

She did not defend it, and they sat silent while the red moon came up out of the sea and turned silver. The sea was so still that the sound of the breakers on the reef was just a gentle crooning. They had an impression of being lonely together in a vastness. He found the impression pleasing; she did not. The sense of being alone—she could not count the Bishop—frightened and oppressed her. He shifted his position so that he could see her face; it was better to look at than the stars.

Then she said, rather wildly: "Oh, I do wish a ship would come to take me away!"

Startled, he said quickly: "I—I—thought you were quite reconciled to being here."

"Reconciled? I might be reconciled if I'd been shipwrecked with another human being," she said.

She did not mean to say it; she did not know that it was in her mind, an underthought, as it were; the words just seemed to come out of her. Then she burst out crying.

The mouth of the flabbergasted Bishop opened wide in his consternation; he quivered. She was shaking with sobs. Reason failed him; he was wholly at a loss. Instinct came to his aid; he put his arm round her, and thrilled. She did not thrust it away.

He drew her to him and said: "Hush—hush!"

It had no effect; she sobbed on. Each sob gave him a painful little jolt. He *must* stop them. But how? They grew more painful, and he looked round wildly with harried eyes, nearly desperate. Instinct again came to his aid; he bent down and kissed her cheek, timidly and gently, and thrilled again. She jerked slightly when his lips touched her cheek, but she did not thrust him away. His mind was in a whirl, but she seemed to relax a little against him and sob with less violence. He thought that it must be the kiss that had done this, and he kissed her again, less timidly. The sobs abated in violence. He sat thrilling to the quick beating of her heart. Then he kissed her again, on the lips. She thrust herself out of his arms that would have held her and withdrew a couple of feet. The sobs were ceasing.

"I'm awfully—sorry. It was very—stupid of me. I oughtn't to have bored you — like this," she said in penitent accents.

"It didn't bore me," he said, quickly. "It distressed me."

"It needn't have. It was only an attack of nerves. The loneliness in all this emptiness got at me."

"You're not lonely—at least you shouldn't be—not quite lonely. I'm here," he said.

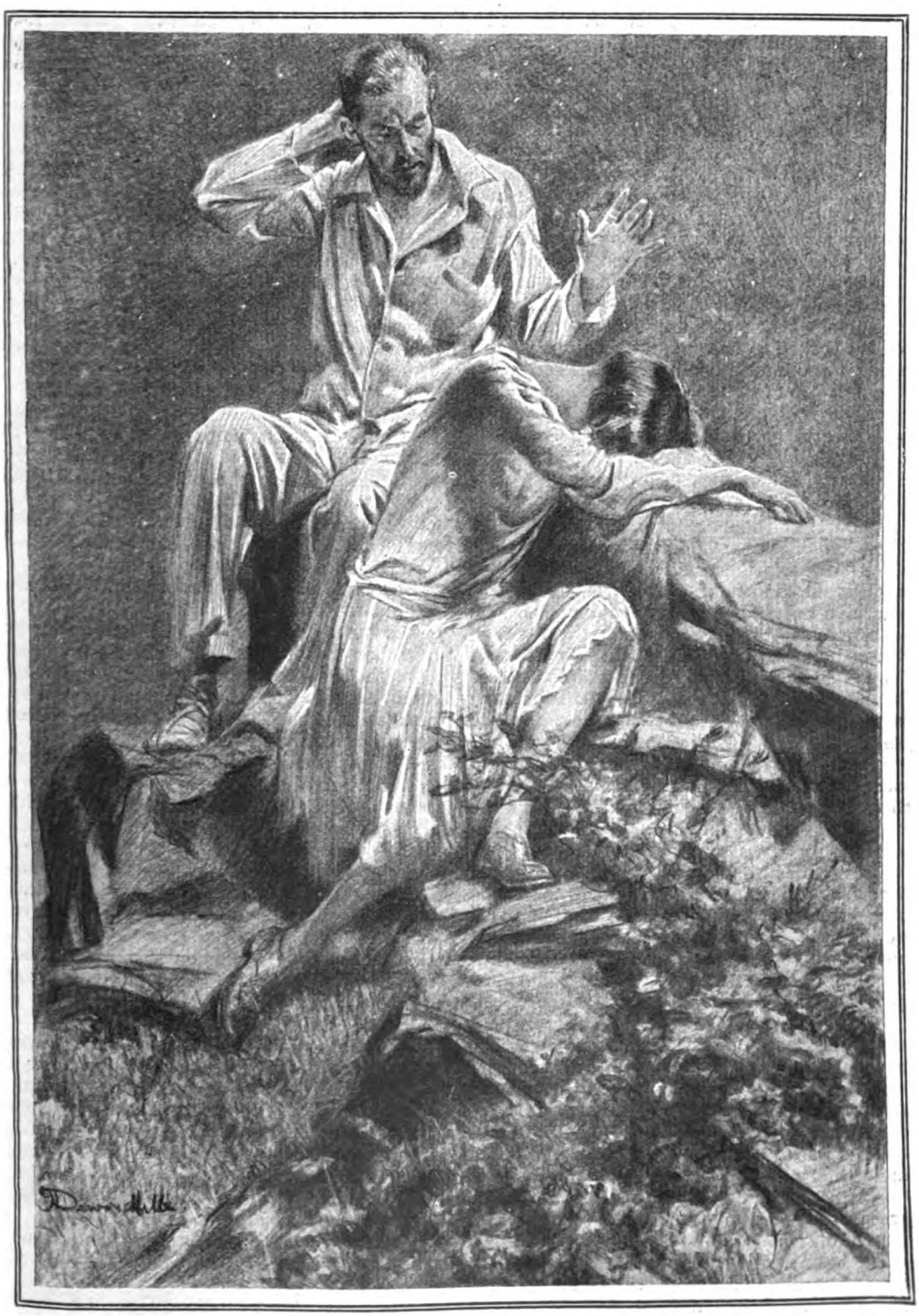
She said nothing, and they sat in silence. He was still thrilling with strange emotions, pity and tenderness and a craving. Presently she said quietly that bed was the best place for her, and they went down the cliff and she left him. He did not go to bed at once; he sat staring down at the pool without seeing it. His mind was still in a whirl; he had suffered an upheaval of his being. The fact that he, vowed to celibacy, had kissed a woman troubled him very little.

Nevertheless, when they met next morning he was embarrassed. But she was so wholly at her ease that she set him at ease also, and at once. It was so plain that she had taken his kisses as soothing measures and thought no more of them. He was not relieved nor pleased; he was immensely disappointed and not a little hurt. But he could say nothing and do nothing.

That day the impulse to get away from him had gone, and she did not shun him. During the heat of the day they talked, as had been their wont, idly and fitfully. Not once did he even drowse, though she slept now and again, and he made more discoveries about her—that she had long eyelashes and delicate ears, that her nose was straight and the nostrils exquisitely cut.

If he found her radiant, she found that he had developed greatly during the last twelve hours, that he looked at her with the eyes of a man. She was aware that the island had played its part in working this change in him; but she knew that she had played a greater part, that her lips had worked the crowning change. A cheaper woman would have been triumphant; she was profoundly thankful.

That evening he was not called on to ask her to come with him to the rim of the crater; she went as a matter of course, and they watched the stars come out. They talked little; though he felt that there were a thousand pregnant things to be said, he did not know what they were. She was aware that he was gazing at her face all the while.



"Reconciled to being here? I might be reconciled if I'd been shipwrecked with another human being," she said. Then she burst out crying. The flabbergasted Bishop was wholly at a loss.

Then he laid his hand gently on hers. She let it rest on it for perhaps twenty seconds, then drew hers gently away. She would not have things hurried; she wished to savour every moment, every step of the progression of love; she desired that progression to be slow.

For his part, he found it delightful to be sitting there beside her, but he was not content. He did not know, he did not even dream that her heart and mind were full of him. He was in a great uncertainty, and his hope was but faint. He had to lay his hand on hers, and thrilled to its warm softness. When she drew it away, he felt oddly balked. His instant instinct was to seize it and hold it firmly. But he refrained. He felt that such a demonstration of his superior strength would be wrong; he was afraid, greatly afraid, of offending and hurting her. Besides, he did not desire to seize; he desired her to give.

DURING the next few days they seemed to have reverted exactly to their old relations. She displayed her old indifferent friendliness to him; he could perceive in her attitude and manner no sign of any remembrance of his kisses, and how to bring home to her the fact that he himself had a thrilling and poignant remembrance of them he did not know. But he did know now that he was in love with her, and the fact that he who had so disliked and despised women was in love with one caused him no surprise or concern whatever.

But though he was not distressed by the fact that he had fallen in love, he was distressed by the certainty that she was not in love with him and never likely to be. He knew that he was not the kind of man who appealed to her, and he knew himself to be so inexperienced in this matter that he could not conceive of his finding a way of awakening love in her. He was in love, and desperately in love; but it was hopeless.

Then, on the fifth day, she disappeared soon after breakfast. During her earlier absences he had been disgruntled enough; this time, when she did not return for their midday meal, he was fairly distracted. He had never imagined that the absence for a few hours of another human being could make life such a hopeless blank. Early in the afternoon he became afraid that some accident had happened to her and went in search of her.

She was not far away; indeed, she had been near enough all the while to observe his impatience. It did not seem to occur to her that she was treating him unkindly, for at intervals she smiled with a tranquil satisfaction that would have persuaded anyone who saw her that she believed that she was doing him good. He passed near her, calling to her; she lay back out of his sight till his calling grew faint; then she went to sleep.

About the time of the evening meal, when he was in the lowest depths of his gloom, she came. He did not know that she was there till she spoke from behind him. He started up to find her enframed by green shrubs in the glowing, golden light of the westering sun, more beautiful than ever. Dazzled, he blinked at her.

Then a sudden sense of injury came on him; he said, huffily: "I've been looking everywhere for you. I thought you'd come to some harm. Didn't you hear me calling?"

"I must have been asleep," she said.

But for an accident they might have remained on these terms for days. But as they came down from the rim of the crater that night, she stumbled against him and would have fallen had he not thrown an arm round her with a quickness that would have been impossible to him when he first came to the island.

She laughed gently and said: "Thanks so much. You were quick."

His arm tightened round her, and he held her to him tightly. Then something gave in him—the repression of years. He lifted her off her feet, and raised her in his arms and, holding her closely to him, kissed her passionately and fiercely.

"I love you! I love you!" he muttered.

She uttered a faint cry, and for a few seconds tried to thrust herself out of his arms. Then she relaxed to his kisses.

In his exaltation he carried her to their mats and sat down with her in his arms. Then he found voice. Years of speaking had given him the power to say what he wanted, and he told her how he loved her, with a passionate eloquence that thrilled and thrilled her. She told him that she loved him.

IT was late when they said good night and went to their beds, and they awoke to a golden day, and golden days followed. But love is a progression, and marriage is its natural end. One morning he was in a brooding mood and absent-minded, with very little to say.

Then of a sudden he said: "Will you marry me, Mary?"

"How can we get married? There's no one to marry us," she said, in a tone of surprise.

"I can—at least I believe I can," he said, thoughtfully. "Considerable concessions are made by the law in the case of persons in our situation, and I believe that a mere declaration that we take one another as husband

and wife would be legally binding. Of course, we ought to make it before witnesses; but since there are no witnesses, a written declaration that we do so should suffice. We could write it on a piece of stuff with my blood."

"With mine," she said, quickly.

"No. With mine," he said, firmly. "And I certainly believe that if I marry us according to its prescribed forms, the Church will hold the marriage valid, which is all that really matters. At any rate, I can pronounce the Church's blessing on our union."

"Then I suppose I must," she said, smiling at him.

When he had done kissing her, they got to work on the marriage contract. It was a simple matter; she washed and dried the handkerchief he had brought ashore; he cut it in half, then pricked his arm with the knife, and with a very finely-pointed piece of hard wood wrote the declaration slowly and carefully on half the handkerchief, in long, thin letters, as clearly as that simple stylus would allow.

She signed it and then he. He gave it to her; she folded it and put it in her hand-bag.

The religious ceremony did not take long. She found it impressive, for his heart was in it, and he invested it with an uncommon solemnity. It did not seem odd to her when he addressed himself and made the responses to his own questions. His signet ring served as a wedding ring, and it fitted her finger. Then, on the other half of the handkerchief, he wrote the certificate of their marriage and signed it and gave it to her.

"I ought to be properly married. I've got two sets of marriage lines," she said, smiling.

Their simple marriage feast was hot baked yams, guavas, plantains, and the milk of green coco-nuts.

FOR the next three days they lived in a golden dream; they might have sought the whole world over and failed to find a more delightful place for a honeymoon.

On the third night they were sitting on the rim of the crater. His arm was round her, and their talk was broken by many kisses.

In the middle of a sentence the words died on her lips, and she stiffened in tense attention. Startled, he looked out over the sea to find out what so held her.

Then she said, sharply: "Look! It isn't a star. It moves. It's a ship!" and she threw out her hand towards the horizon on the left.

He looked with all his eyes, and presently saw a light that moved.

"It *is* a ship," he said.

"The matches! They're in my hand-bag!" she cried.

He sprang up and scrambled quickly down the fissure; she rose and stared at the moving light, her lips parted and her hands tightly clasped. It stood for so much.

He seemed to her a long while coming. Surely he could not fail to find the hand-bag. Then she heard him mounting the fissure, and wondered at his slowness. When he reached her, she dropped on one knee beside the beacon and held out her hand for the matches.

"I haven't brought the matches," he said, slowly, in a firm but troubled voice. "It is too soon. The world can wait a while. Another ship will come."

She rose slowly, then turned sharply and threw her arms round his neck.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Forthcoming—

A new "CHALLENGER" story:

"When the World Screamed,"

by

A. CONAN DOYLE

will shortly appear

Cabin Number Five

By

H. de VERE STACPOOLE

Illustrated by
BRYCE HAMILTON

I.

IT was at No. 33 Wharf, Southampton Docks, that he saw her first.

The *Astrid* had closed her hatches, the locking bars were fixed, and the last of the passengers coming on board had passed up the long sloping gangway leading from the wharf to the promenade deck.

Passports had been taken by the chief steward, tea was going round, served by Java boys (she was an East-bound ship), and the string band was addressing the dismal Southampton winter's afternoon with the question :—

"Any ice to-day, lady ?"

Moulton, leaning on the teak rail, tea-cup in hand, saw her as she turned from the passport table to the second steward, who was selling tickets for deck chairs ; just caught her profile against the grey sky, or as much of it as her hat would show, the shrug of her shoulders settling her furs, then her full face, and as she turned to go below he heard her voice in conversation with one of the stewards. She was complaining that her cabin had no bathroom attached, as had been promised at the shipping office. Yet, even raised in irritation, her voice was sweet, round, and full. Coming forward he saw a violet lying on the planking of the deck ; she had evidently dropped it from the great bunch pinned to her cloak. He picked it up and went on, turning in by the door that leads to the purser's office, B deck, and the stairs leading down to the saloon and dining-room.

His cabin was on B deck, forward, just under the bridge, and with two big ports, one giving a view right ahead ; a single *cabin de luxe* with a bathroom opening aft, large and well-furnished as all the *Astrid's* cabins are. He placed the violet on a book-ledge and then began to unpack.

Though well-to-do, he had no valet. He preferred looking after himself. Under thirty and good-looking, of the bronzed military type, you would have said, watching him, "Here is an old bachelor in the making, almost made." He explored the lockers to see that they were dustless, stowed his shirts, handkerchiefs, and ties on the shelves, coats on the hangers in the wardrobe, and so on, finishing by fixing up a gadget by the door for holding odds and ends. Yes, decidedly, a bachelor confirmed, or at least in the process of confirmation.

The violet lying on the shelf lay unnoticed. He had forgotten it, this less than trifle picked up at the prompting of the moment, and on account of a girl who had made a momentary impression upon him.

II.

JUST so, but she impressed him again that night, and the impression somehow carried with it the perfume of a violet.

The two hundred passengers of the *Astrid* were crushing down the broad saloon stairs to dinner. Fat Dutchwomen resplendent in the pearls of the East, thin ones, Frenchwomen, a crowd of English bound for Algiers, an American or two—and the Girl.

She was going down the stairs right in front of Moulton. He noticed the perfect curves of her white neck and the fact that she was unaccompanied, also the extreme grace of her shingled head, and the fact that the rippling hair was of the colour of phosphor bronze.

He sat at the purser's table and she at the chief engineer's, and they were in view one of the other.

Yes. She was pretty beyond doubt, but there were girls even prettier amongst the passengers of the *Astrid*—and yet——

No, it was not the question of looks ; line, form, and colour reveal the beauties or imperfections of the body, but movement tells of the mind—the soul. Her movements had fascinated him unconsciously

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from the first. The way she stood at the passport table, the way she turned, held her head, shifted her cloak; and now it was the same.

Watch people eat, and if they are unguarded in their movements you will learn more of their character than a page of confessions could give you. He watched her, and as he watched he became aware of the fact that she was observing him too.

Paying scarcely any attention to the man beside her, she seemed to be taking stock of all the people in her vicinity; it seemed to him as though she were turning them over in her mind, and criticizing them unfavourably, dismissing each as not worthy of her regard—yet her eyes returned to his, and, he imagined, not without some interest, some leaning towards friendliness

III.

"ARE you going to Algiers?"

They had passed from the saloon, where coffee was being served, to the starboard promenade deck, and the question was hers.

"No," said Moulton, "I'm going to Genoa."

"So'm I."

"And after Genoa?"

Moulton, leaning on the teak rail, tea-cup in hand, caught her profile, the shrug of her shoulders settling her furs, then her full face.

"After Genoa," said she, "I'm going, I don't know exactly where. And you?"

"Me. I'm going to Monte Carlo."

They took chairs and sat for a moment watching some of the deck hands rigging the canvas screen that would turn the deck into a dance-room. Just a word at the coffee table where he had handed her a cup and they were friends—at least acquaintances—at all events, not strangers.

"Do you play?" asked she, suddenly turning towards him.

"At Monte?"

"Yes."

"No. At least, never for more than a few francs. I haven't the gambling instinct—about the only vice I haven't got."

She sat silent for a moment, and he watched her profile in the light of the electrics and noticed how, suddenly, her face had changed, become stern, with lips compressed, the face of Themis rather than that of a young girl.

"You may be thankful that you have not got it," said she, "but even so, and knowing, as you must, all the misery that place has caused, why do you go there at all—I mean into the Casino? You are just like a lot of people I know. If you called them gamblers they would take a libel action against you, and they *aren't* gamblers; all the same, they 'go to the Rooms' just for fun, lose a few hundred francs just for fun, support the place just for fun. I'm bitter about it, and I have reason. My very best friend was ruined there. He had gone through the war unharmed, only to be ruined in that beastly place, and now he is in worse than prison."

"How's that?" asked Moulton.

"I can't tell you," she said, "I can't explain things. The story is not mine to tell, and I would not have mentioned it, only that the name of Monte Carlo made me see red. I can only say that this man was well off, young, and going to be married, and that in one week Monte Carlo left him a beggar, with the choice of exile or suicide. That's all. Look, the band is coming out."

He watched the bandsmen taking their places by the saloon companion-way door, and now the deck was filling with people to the tuning-up of the violins, and the girl, rising from her chair, was pulling her cloak round her shoulders.

"I never dance," she said. "At least, now."

Moulton watched her as she passed through the crowd and vanished below. She had intrigued him vastly. So young, so pretty, yet so extraordinarily serious and different from other girls. A tragedy had flattened her life out, he felt sure of that, and almost sure that the tragedy was that of the man—that "very best friend" who was ruined at Monte. She had been in love with him without any doubt, it was her story she was telling as well as that of the ruined man hence the bitterness.

Well, it was none of Moulton's affair, and yet, somehow, when he had turned in that night his mind could not keep off it, and when he dropped to sleep it pursued him.

He was in a church waiting to act as best man to this charming girl and the bridegroom was late. Someone said he had lost all his money at Monte Carlo, and he, Moulton, was consoling the bride-to-be—then he awoke to the fact that the ship had a roll on and that unsecured trifles in the bathroom were fetching loose.

IV.

HE did not see her again till they were through the Gut of Gibraltar and the ship was running on an even keel, then for a whole long afternoon he had her to himself.

He had taken it badly, just as a nigger takes the measles. There was nothing in the world for him but her phosphor-bronze hair, her grey-blue eyes, the rug he was tucking round her knees—yet his manner showed nothing of this.

"And to-morrow morning," said she, "we shall be in Algiers. We stop there five hours; are you going ashore?"

"Are you?"

"Yes. There is someone I want to see, a friend, staying at the Hôtel d'Oran. I asked the purser where it was, and he says it is in the Arab town close to the landing stage. I thought perhaps that if you were going ashore——" She stopped.

"Yes?"

"Well, I don't like to give you the trouble, but if you wouldn't mind walking with me there——"

"Mind!" cried Moulton. "Of course I wouldn't mind. Delighted. Is that rug comfortable?"

She went below after tea was served and did not appear at dinner. He waited on deck till after ten on the chance that she might come up, and then retired disconsolate, yet buoyed up by the prospect of that journey ashore with her to-morrow to the Hôtel d'Oran.

But he could not sleep.

There were things that kept him awake other than the passion for her which had sprung up like a miraculously growing plant. Who was she, what was she, and who was the friend she had to meet? He had found out her name, Chillingham, entered on the ship's passenger list as of London. That told him nothing. Then in the long conversation that afternoon she had spoken of the ship

The girl, rising from her chair, was pulling her cloak round her shoulders. "I never dance," she said. "At least, now."

as though she were an expert in ship matters, and one thing she had said which struck him strangely. "Your cabin is on B deck, and of course it has a bathroom like the others?"

She must have found out in some way the position of his cabin—maybe she had seen him entering or leaving it, but why the inquiry about the bathroom? He remembered her dispute with the steward on starting. Was she jealous that he had a bathroom and she none?

He fell asleep on the unsolved proposition, awaking to find the cabin filled with sunlight and the siren of the *Astrid* saluting the heights of Algiers.

V.

SHE was waiting for him after breakfast at the gangway leading down to the floating landing stage. They don't ask you for passports at Algiers, at

least when you land from any of the short-staying ships, and Miss Chillingham was aware of this fact, for she stated it. She seemed to know all about the place and its customs, just as she knew all about the ship and the disposition of its cabins, and if Moulton had not been blind he might have shied, or at least blinked, at any adventure ashore with a stranger so intriguing and so full to the ordinary mind of suggestions.

But, blind or clear-sighted, no man shies at pleasure, and the whole of this business was a sheer delight; helping her across the division between the lighters that made up the landing stage, fending off the dirty

Arab beggar children, walking beside her up the long slope that leads to the high level above the arcades, inquiring for the hotel—all this was sheer delight. Also it was hot work in the blazing sun; however, there was a cold bath waiting for him at the Hôtel d'Oran.

It is situated near the fruit market, a dingy structure possessing a courtyard always littered with luggage, luggage that seems to belong to people in flight from the amenities of the hotel.

At the desk, behind which a distracted-looking clerk was disputing with an American woman the rate of exchange on the dollar, Miss Chillingham inquired for her friend.

M. Raymond Martin was not staying at the hotel. Oh, yes, on second thoughts he was—but he was out—but he might have returned—would Mademoiselle follow the page and see for herself?

Moulton watched her passing down a passage leading from the courtyard to the

Moulton saw a door open and a young man come out, saw her fly into his arms, saw them disappear.

salle à manger, saw a door open and a young man come out, saw her fly into his arms, saw them disappear.

He sat down on a bench.

Well, that was that. Raymond Martin. The man without doubt who had been ruined at Monte.

He felt done in, betrayed—worse, made use of.

Feeling nervous, perhaps, of being alone in a strange city, she had brought him ashore to pilot her to her lover.

A big Saratoga trunk standing before him told him all this in plain language till he remembered the cardinal fact he had forgotten. The fact that she knew nothing of his feeling for her.

His new-born love had been too young to speak. No, the fault was not hers. Fate alone was responsible for the business, and against Fate it is useless to grumble, useless to kick.

He lit a cigarette.

Twenty minutes passed. Then she appeared coming down the passage, followed by the other.

What a good-looking fellow he was, this Raymond, young, bronzed, full of good spirits, rather shabbily dressed, it is true, but still a gentleman! She introduced him, and then, after a word or two of conversation, they left the place, taking their way past the flower market and back to the ship.

Raymond was staying in Algiers, but he

would come on board for a cocktail and a chat before the ship started. She was due out at noon, and it was now fifteen minutes past ten.

On deck, amidst the crowd of new passengers bound for Genoa, Moulton left the pair, going off to the smoke-room to brood over a cigar, determined in his mind that he was done with women for ever and ever, unconscious of the fact that a certain woman was by no means done with him.

VI.

HE was finishing his second cigar when the last warning blast of the siren brought him on deck. The landing stage was already being drawn up; clinging on to the ship's side, regardless of the notice about the propellers, men in boats selling carpets, rugs, opera-glasses, and oranges were doing a last deal with people leaning out of the lower ports, and half-a-dozen people on the lighters were waving good-bye to friends on board. There was no sign of Raymond; he must have gone ashore at the second warning of the siren, half an hour ago. No sign of Miss Chillingham.

He waited, watching the ship being manœuvred out of the harbour; then, Algiers astern and the tramp of the engines telling of full speed ahead, he went to his cabin, closed his door, and took off his coat to wash his hands. The bathroom door was a tiny bit open; it opened suddenly and fully and a man appeared. It was Raymond.

"Good God!" cried Moulton. "You! Why, the ship has started!"

The full meaning of the situation did not strike him at once. He fancied that Raymond, wishing to see him, had strayed into the cabin, gone into the bathroom to wash his hands, and got carried off, a fancy that vanished at once as Raymond, stepping forward, shot the bolt of the cabin door.

"You'll excuse me," said Raymond, "but I'm an absolutely desperate man, a hunted stag, a deserter from the Foreign Legion. Get me? Absolutely driven, or I wouldn't have arranged this trick."

Moulton took in the whole business at once and fully.

He sat down on the edge of the bed and Raymond took a chair.

"How long have you been here?" asked Moulton.

"One hour, hiding in the bathroom, and a dam' Java steward tried to get in, but I held the door and he thought it was you and went away."

"You came on board with Miss Chillingham, taking advantage of the fact that visitors to the ship were not required to show passports?"

"That's it," said Raymond.

"And mixing up in the crowd you found your way to my cabin and hid. Did Miss Chillingham tell you where to hide?"

"She told me that there was a bathroom to your cabin and that it was Cabin Five, B Deck. She said when I'd explained to you she was sure you wouldn't mind; she said I'd better hide in the bathroom for fear of the stewards till you turned up—and here you are," said Raymond with a laugh.

Moulton contemplated him for a moment. There was something youthful and joyous about Raymond despite all his troubles, something that disarmed anger and blunted irritation. All the same the situation was a difficult one to swallow, made none the easier by the fact that Mary Chillingham had devised it—or, more strictly speaking, advised it.

"You come to me like this," said Moulton, becoming calmer, "and of course I can't refuse you help, at least such help as I can afford you. But before we go farther, will you kindly give me some account of yourself and what has brought you to this position? It seems to me a queer bargain has been forced on me, but at all events I would like to see the invoice of the goods."

"Rather," said Raymond. "Yes, of course. You see, it's this way. Mary——"

"Will you kindly not refer to Miss Chillingham in any remarks you have to make?" said Moulton, icily. "I only want to know about yourself."

"All right," said Raymond. "I expect you're angry with her, but it's not her fault. We were both desperate. All my fault. It's that cursed Monte that did me in. I had five thousand, and I went there and they scooped the lot. There was nothing left for me but a hole in the water, or selling buttons on a card in Fleet Street. A French chap told me to join the Legion, and I took his advice. What I chiefly want to get free for," said Raymond, "is to scrag that chap, inveigle him from France over the Italian border and scrag him. However, that's neither here nor there. What matters is, I hadn't been in the Legion a year when Uncle George pops off and leaves me a hundred thousand—he thought I was in Africa, and I was.

"A year and six months I've been in the Legion, I mean in hell, and we have been six months arranging this stunt. Money was sent to me, and I got clothes and had them hid in the house of a Jew by the Tlemcen gate at Sidi. Then news came to me of the day I ought to make the start. I shed my Legionnaire togs at the Jew's and got into these civies. Nothing is easier if you have money than escaping from the

Legion, at least for the first few hours; you have just to change and walk to the railway station; there you'll find Arab police and military police, but they can't spot you if you carry it off properly and if you aren't marked in any way. Where the Legion grips you by the throat is at the frontiers and at the sea—when you try to go aboard a ship.

"You are asked for your papers, those cursed papers, and for your passport.

"Well, I just went to the station and took train. I didn't go to Oran, that's a mug's game. I went by direction to Algiers and put up at that hotel. I've been there nearly a week. Then this morning you see how it worked, simple as anything. Just came on board with you and her, no questions asked, though I saw some rotten police standing by the entrance to the landing stage—just came on board and there you are."

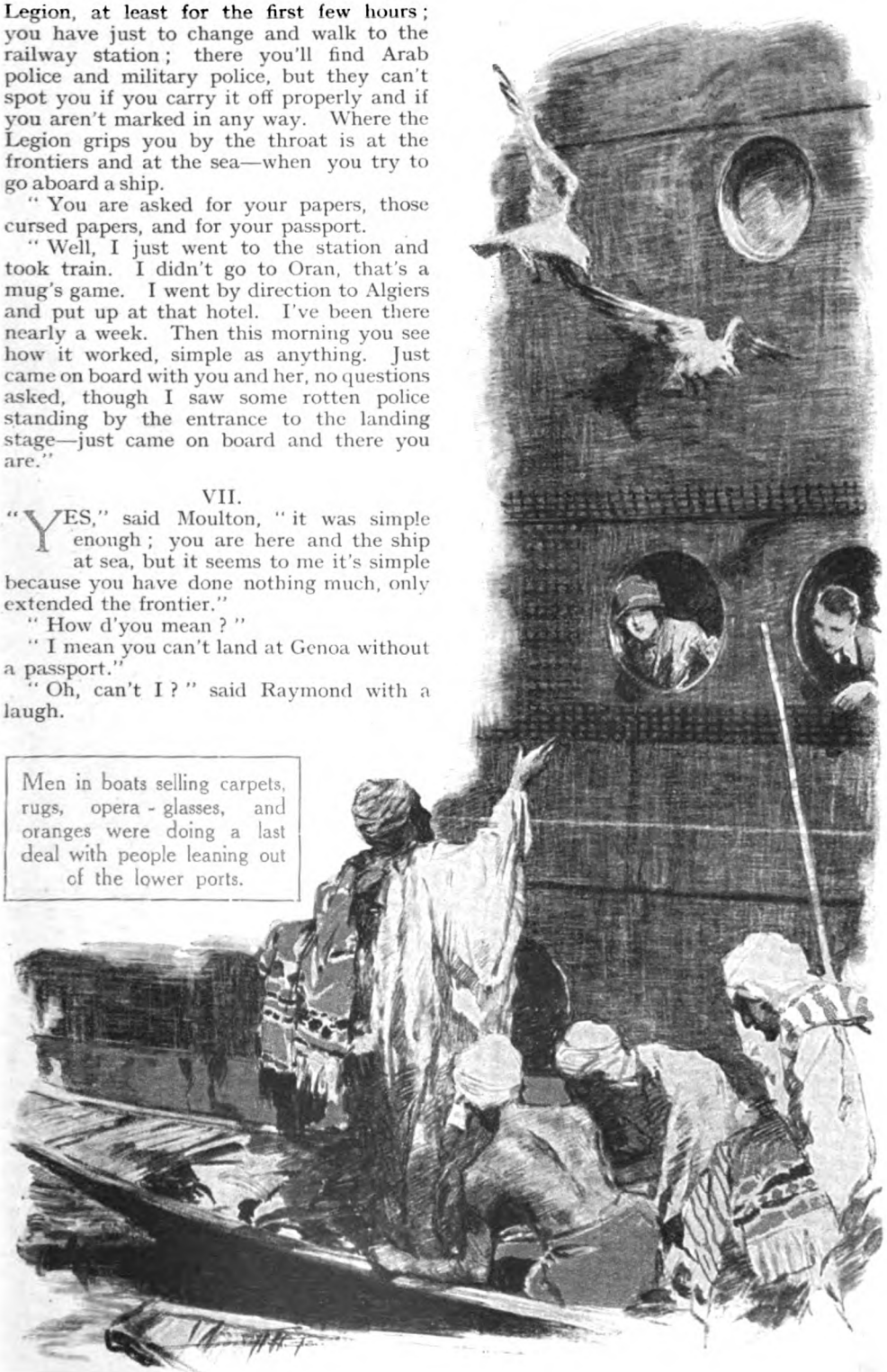
VII.

"YES," said Moulton, "it was simple enough; you are here and the ship at sea, but it seems to me it's simple because you have done nothing much, only extended the frontier."

"How d'you mean?"

"I mean you can't land at Genoa without a passport."

"Oh, can't I?" said Raymond with a laugh.



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would come on board for a cocktail and a chat before the ship started. She was due out at noon, and it was now fifteen minutes past ten.

On deck, amidst the crowd of new passengers bound for Genoa, Moulton left the pair, going off to the smoke-room to brood over a cigar, determined in his mind that he was done with women for ever and ever, unconscious of the fact that a certain woman was by no means done with him.

VI.

HE was finishing his second cigar when the last warning blast of the siren brought him on deck. The landing stage was already being drawn up; clinging on to the ship's side, regardless of the notice about the propellers, men in boats selling carpets, rugs, opera-glasses, and oranges were doing a last deal with people leaning out of the lower ports, and half-a-dozen people on the lighters were waving good-bye to friends on board. There was no sign of Raymond; he must have gone ashore at the second warning of the siren, half an hour ago. No sign of Miss Chillingham.

He waited, watching the ship being manœuvred out of the harbour; then, Algiers astern and the tramp of the engines telling of full speed ahead, he went to his cabin, closed his door, and took off his coat to wash his hands. The bathroom door was a tiny bit open; it opened suddenly and fully and a man appeared. It was Raymond.

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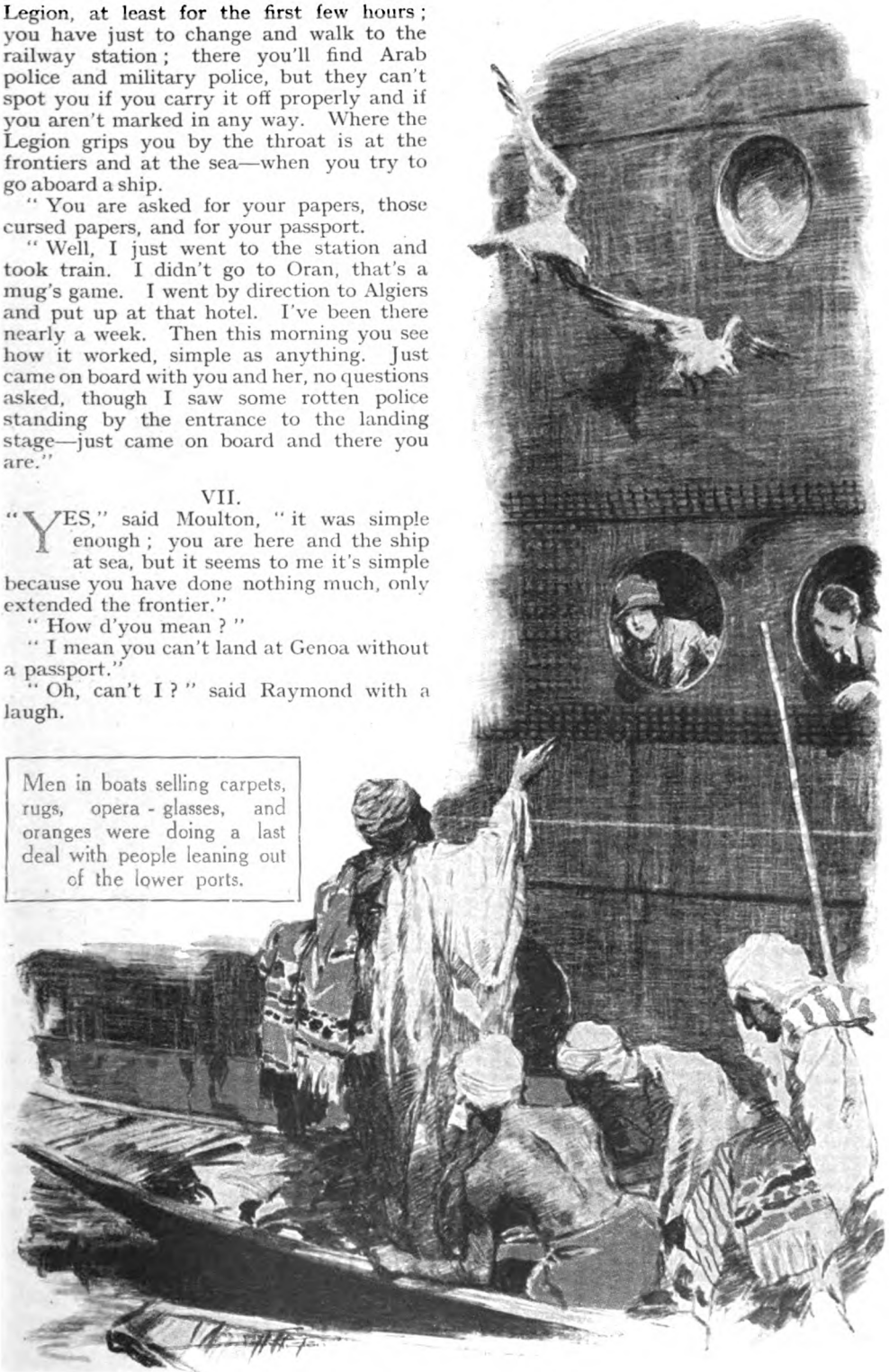


Men in boats selling carpets, rugs, opera-glasses, and oranges were doing a last deal with people leaning out of the lower ports.

"No, you can't, and it's not a laughing matter, either for you or for me, for, though I'm willing to help you up to the hilt, it seems to me——"

"Yes?"

"Nothing," said Moulton. He had been about to say that it seemed to him he was in a very false position, but the words would not come. She had used him for the escape of this man, whom she would marry, no doubt, should he get free, she had put him to inconvenience and perhaps had put him in a dangerous position so that his rival might benefit, but she had done it unconscious of the fact that he cared for her deeply, so he kept down the words that were rising and went back.

"Unless you have a false passport, you can't possibly land."

"And I haven't," cried Raymond. "I'm not going to bother the passport people. You see, I know Genoa harbour; I've been there twice and sailed it in the regatta, and there's a fellow waiting for me. This is the dodge. If you let me lie doggo here, we get to Genoa early the day after to-morrow morning. I'll leave the cabin and come along the deck with my collar up, a passenger come up for an early cigarette. Get aft and drop over. The propellers will be going dead slow, or, maybe, stopped. You see, I'm used to the water. Chater will be waiting for me."

"Who's Chater?"

"Chap who owns a fourteen-tonner with an auxiliary engine. The whole job has been in train for more than three months, all worked out like clockwork, all her doing——"

"Yes, I can see that," said Moulton, grimly.

HE was thinking to himself, what a woman for a man to own as a helper and a friend—let alone a lover—but his face showed nothing of his thoughts.

"I can see that, but now comes the question of what we are to do at the moment. We have almost two days and two nights before us—the devil!" He had suddenly come upon a fact that had not occurred to the light-hearted Raymond.

"What's up?" asked the latter.

"The Javanese boys, the stewards. If I leave the cabin, Achmat, that's my room boy, will be in to tidy up things; he's always popping in and out. He's looking for his tip."

"I can hide in the bathroom same as I did just now."

"You can't. Achmat will see me leave the cabin—he's always squatting on his heels in the alleyway—then he'll come in, maybe, and find the bathroom door bolted on the inside, then he'll scratch his head and call Piroli, or some of his friends, and they'll discuss this black magic and go to the chief steward, and then—— Besides, look how we are fixed. You seem to think that blessed bathroom is a certain refuge. It's not. Leaving aside to-day, I shall have to leave here in the morning for breakfast, and then Achmat will be in to make the bed and tidy up. You can no more stop that than you can stop the sun or the tide. He comes in, makes the bed, and finds the bathroom door bolted from the inside. Well, there you are."

"It seems to me," said Raymond, "the only way out—but then I wouldn't like to bother you to do that."

"What?"

"Well, if you could possibly stay in bed, put in an *æger*, so to speak—it's only two days."

"I'm damned if I do," said Moulton, the harlequin position so suggested to him tapping suddenly sources of hot wrath. Wrath against Mary Chillingham, Raymond, the ship, himself, and the whole position, but mainly against Mary.

That thinker-out of plots and plans! Could this be one of her suggestions?

"No, of course not," said Raymond. "I didn't expect you would. Wouldn't do it myself. You see, we never worked this thing out to its last conclusions; it seemed so simple to hide in a bathroom, but it isn't. We must think of something else. Listen!"

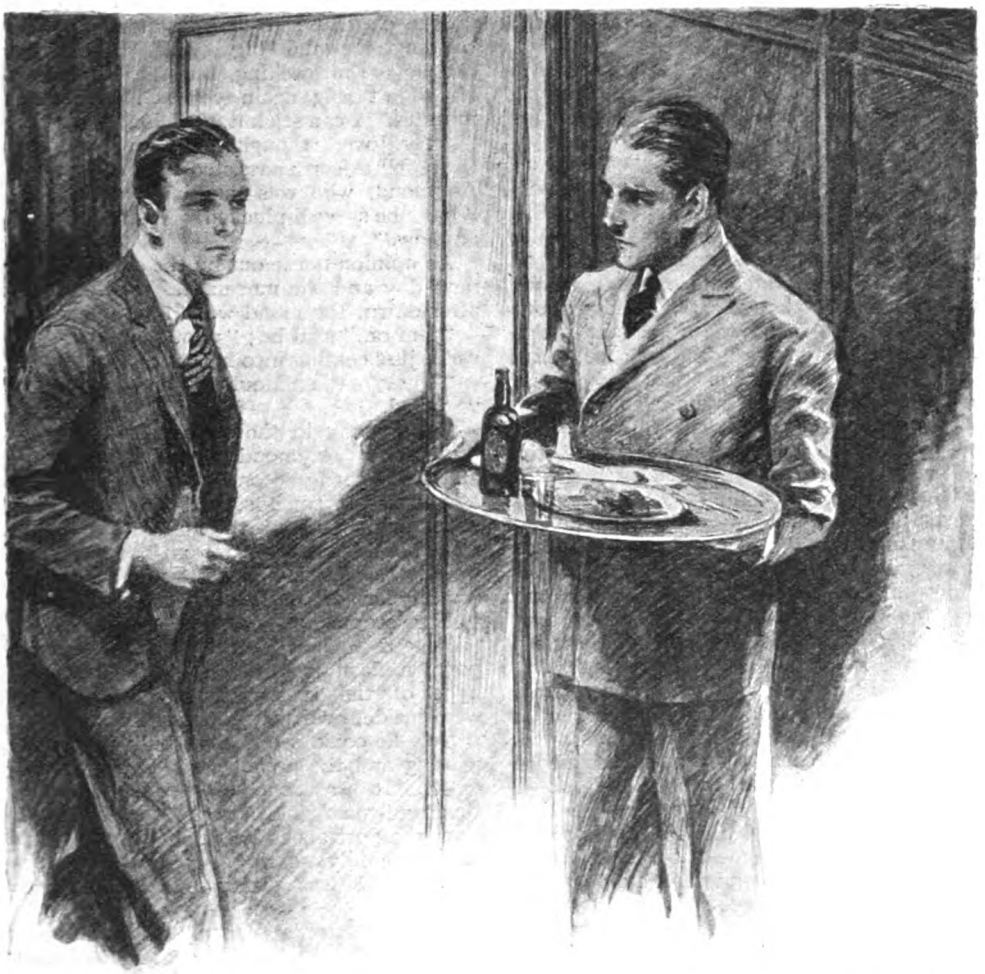
"It's the luncheon gong," said Moulton, "and I'm pretty hungry, but, seems to me, I can't leave here—not safely, anyhow."

"Risk it," said Raymond, taking a cigarette from his case. "Risk it. Damn it, I don't mind. I'm fed up with the whole business. Go down, and if Achmat turns up I'll try bribery—or scraggery. Shove him through the port. Go on, old man, and have your luncheon, and bring a banana for Raymond."

"No," said Moulton, "you'd never bribe Achmat, he couldn't understand what you meant. Get into the bathroom and shut the door and bolt it. When I knock three times, open."

Ten minutes later the knock came and Raymond emerged to find luncheon. That is to say, a tray with a plate of goulash, a roll, butter, cheese, and a sweet—enough for one, also a bottle of tonic water.

They divided the food. It was not enough for two, but they made out. Then, Raymond returning to the bathroom, Moulton rang for Achmat and ordered the things to be taken away.



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VIII.

"IT seems to me," said Raymond later that day, "that if you will carry on this business—and, mind you, I don't want you to do so—but if you *will* carry on, it would be better to do as I said before and take to your bed. You see, Achmat will begin to wonder at seeing you up and about, yet unable to leave the place. Specially at dinner time; and it's just as comfy in bed, it seems to me, as anywhere else in this stuffy old cabin."

"Maybe you're right," said Moulton.

He undressed and got into bed, and away from the background of his mind shot up a childish memory of a warm summer afternoon when he was sent to bed early for some childish fault. The memory did not soothe him.

Nor did Raymond's talk as the latter sat on the little settee under the side port and smoked cigarettes.

Raymond had a mental relationship to Archie—that is to say, Archie without the genius of Wodehouse and the background of Jeeves, but the contents of his mind troubled Moulton less than its attitude; apologetic, humble, anxious to please and, if possible, amuse the bedridden one.

And She was going to bind herself for ever with this mind in holy matrimony. The thought in some curious way relieved the monotony and oppressive gloom of the situation. So would she suffer in the years

to come, surely, inevitably, after the paint and gilt of wedlock had rubbed off and the glamour faded.

He dropped into a doze, to be awakened by the dinner gong, and, Raymond having retired to the bathroom, Achmat was rung for.

IX.

IF you know the Java servant, you will know that the bathroom has a fascination for him beyond other rooms, especially if there are brass taps and gadgets to be polished. There were lots of these in the bathrooms of the *Astrid*, and above everything else there was a spit-and-polish chief bedroom steward, a Dyak who had once been a warrior on the Itang river, and whose present god was Sheen.

Now, Achmat had cabin Number [illegible] to answer for, and he had been kept [illegible] of the bathroom for quite a number of hours. He had come along, polishing cloth in hand, at eleven o'clock, and found the place occupied (Raymond in residence), and now at seven-thirty, having cleared away the dinner things and tray, and tidied a few odds and ends, he was advancing to the bathroom door when Moulton called him back, shaking his head and indicating that he was going to get up and dress and wanted the cabin clear.

"All the same," said Raymond, when he had gone, "we can't play the game twice. If the bounder tries to get in again and we baulk him, he's sure to smell a rat—I know!"

He got down on his knees and examined the bed. It was a true bed, not a bunk, and there was room underneath for a man to hide—or wasn't there?

Raymond, on his knees, came to the decision that there was, then he began to get under.

There wasn't. But "wasn't" is a compound word written all over English history to be crossed out by the word "was."

It took nearly half a minute in the doing, and half a minute is for some adventures a long time. Then a voice came from under the bed.

"I once read a book called 'Flat Land,' by a mathematical Johnnie. I feel as if I was there. Respiration is difficult. Ring for the bounder and get the business over."

Moulton rang—and rang—and rang, raising at last a Dutch-Javanese who looked like a golliwog and was evidently Achmat's locum tenens. Moulton explained that he wanted Achmat to put the bathroom to rights, and the locum nodded, vanished, and returned presently with a whisky-and-soda on a tray.

"It's better than nothing,' said the voice under the bed. "Don't scoff it. Keep it for Raymond. No, I won't come out. It's hell, but it's nothing to what I'll have to do the day after to-morrow morning. It's training for the big event. Meanwhile, I believe I'm swelling, but that's a detail. No, don't ring again yet. Give him ten minutes. I can stick it all right."

"By Jove," thought Moulton that night as he fell asleep unassisted by the snores of Raymond, who was bunking on the floor "but he's well-plucked. Worth saving anyhow."

An opinion borne out by the events of the next day and the morning after when, just after dawn, Raymond woke him.

"I'm off," said he; "pilot's on board and we're just coming into harbour."

"Luck," said Moulton, and the other vanished.

Moulton lay in the vague dawn that lit the cabin. Raymond would have to go aft through the second class and find the after-rail. If some second-class passenger were hanging about the rail all would be ruined. If not, a dive from the after-rail would be easy. He listened. He could scarcely hear the engines. Now they seemed to have stopped.

He got up and looked through the side port; a flash from the still revolving red light of the breakwater told him they were inside, evidently in charge of a tug.

Now he could see a great bulk they were passing and the name *Conte Verde* written on it. It was one of the twenty-five-thousand-ton South American boats. Now from the port ahead he could see the Silos Wharf rapidly nearing.

Raymond was either free by now or arrested.

An hour later at early breakfast everything seemed quiet. He heard nothing said of a stowaway having been found, though he questioned the chief engineer, who was breakfasting, on the question of stowaways in general, and, satisfied that his cabin companion was either dead or free, he went ashore. He saw nothing of Miss Chillingham as he left the ship. He neither looked nor asked for her. He never wanted to see her again.

X.

IT was a fortnight later when one day a lady called at his hotel in Monte Carlo.

"Raymond told me your hotel here, and I have come to see you and thank you. I didn't see you the morning we disembarked at Genoa because I didn't land till you were all ashore. Raymond is safe. Can I ever, ever thank you enough?"

"It's nothing," said Moulton, rather stiffly. "I only did what anyone would have done."

"Don't say that," said she. "I know of all you went through for him, and there's

someone else wants to thank you: the girl who was engaged to him long ago and who has stuck to him through thick and thin——"

"But see here," cried Moulton; "aren't you—I mean——" He stopped. A great light was breaking on him, some instinct had suddenly told him the truth.

"I thought you were engaged to him—at least, you know what I mean."

"My brother—I mean, my half-brother—though he has always been to me as a brother."

"I didn't know. Didn't want to. When he spoke of you I told him to change the subject. I was sore and savage—can't you see why? I didn't want him to have you. I wanted you myself." He took both her hands. "There, it's out."

"And yet you helped him!"

"Yes. I helped him to rob me of the thing I loved best."

"But he hasn't," said she.

And, if an inopportune hotel waiter who blundered into the room a few minutes later could have been questioned, he would entirely have confirmed her words.

"Raymond is safe. Can I ever, ever thank you enough?"
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THE PRINCE'S BIRTHDAY PRESENT

By

Anthony Armstrong

("A. A." of "Punch")

Illustrated by
I. G. ILLINGWORTH

ONCE upon a time there was a King and he had a son who was very, very clever. In fact, he was so smart that the shopkeepers would only accept cash.

And he had had to take to Patience because none of the courtiers would play cards with him.

Well, one day, when Prince Pointedface and his father were discussing affairs of state, there was a sort of flash, and

"I *think* that's a Wunk," said the Fairy, with a sigh not unmixed with pride.

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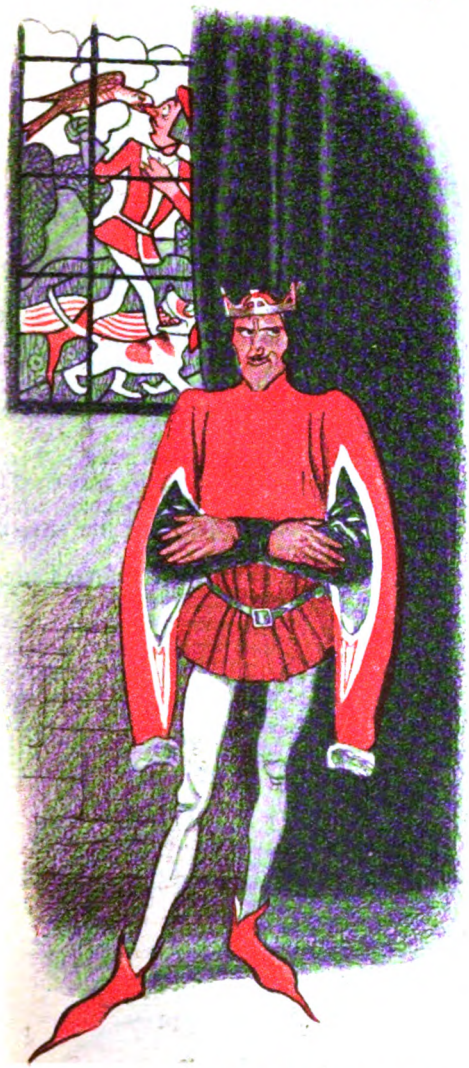

Prince Pointedface looked very cunning. "Are you ready, then?" he said, as the Fairy poised her wand. "Well, then, I wish for three more wishes."

a Fairy appeared between them. They were not startled at all, because fairies had a habit of travelling about like that. The King merely changed the subject in a polite fashion and remarked that it was a fine day for appearing.

"Yes, very fine day for it!" agreed the Fairy. "Let me see," she went on, getting to business right away, "the Prince comes of age in a week's time, doesn't he?"

"He does!" answered the old King, who knew all about that; for his son had been making a good thing out of it for the last two months.

"Well," said the Fairy, turning to the young man, "I've got a birthday present for you now, as I did not attend the customary fairy gathering round your cradle."

"Oh, that didn't really matter!" said the Prince, in a self-satisfied tone. "The others gave me all the usual presents, Health, and Wealth, and Long Life, and Happiness——"

"Quite, quite," interrupted the Fairy. "I was down to have given you Good Looks. But if you're satisfied——"

The Prince gave a start and glanced sideways at a mirror. He considered that remark a nasty dig.

"Well, of course," he began, "if you'd like——"

"Oh, it's too late *now*," went on the Fairy, scoring all along the line. "Much," she added, looking more closely at him.

The old King coughed meaningly at this point. It seemed to him the conversation was taking rather a personal tone.

"Well, what are you going to give me now?" demanded Prince Pointedface, changing the subject with some alacrity.

"I am going to grant you three wishes."

"Oh, *that!*" replied the Prince in a bored fashion—as if he had been offered a silver-plated toast-rack.

"Don't say '*that*' like that!" said the Fairy, crossly. "It's a very nice present."

"Quite, quite. Very nice," again interrupted the King, rather anxiously. "Say 'Thank you,' my boy!"

"Can I wish for anything I like?" asked the Prince, becoming slightly interested.

"Anything."

"And you promise you'll grant it?"

"Of course," snapped the Fairy, getting annoyed.

"You're sure you'll be able to?" continued Prince Pointedface, suspiciously.

The Fairy snorted indignantly—if fairies do that sort of thing. "Look here," she began. "You sha'n't have them if you're going——"

"Sorry, sorry! No offence," hurriedly apologized the Prince. "Well, my first wish is to have a Wunk."

The Fairy, who had raised her wand in readiness, lowered it again.

"A *what?*" she said. "I don't think I quite caught it."

"A Wunk," said the Prince, who was a young man of original ideas.

"A Wunk?" repeated the Fairy, taken aback. "Wunk! Wunk!" She paused thoughtfully. "Wunk! What's it like?"

"Well, that's what I've often wondered," replied the Prince, amiably.

"Wouldn't you prefer a guinea-pig, my boy," put in the old King, anxiously. "The stables are rather full at the moment——"

Cabin Number Five

By

H. de VERE STACPOOLE

Illustrated by
BRYCE HAMILTON

I.

IT was at No. 33 Wharf, Southampton Docks, that he saw her first.

The *Astrid* had closed her hatches, the locking bars were fixed, and the last of the passengers coming on board had passed up the long sloping gangway leading from the wharf to the promenade deck.

Passports had been taken by the chief steward, tea was going round, served by Java boys (she was an East-bound ship), and the string band was addressing the dismal Southampton winter's afternoon with the question :—

"Any ice to-day, lady ?"

Moulton, leaning on the teak rail, tea-cup in hand, saw her as she turned from the passport table to the second steward, who was selling tickets for deck chairs ; just caught her profile against the grey sky, or as much of it as her hat would show, the shrug of her shoulders settling her furs, then her full face, and as she turned to go below he heard her voice in conversation with one of the stewards. She was complaining that her cabin had no bathroom attached, as had been promised at the shipping office. Yet, even raised in irritation, her voice was sweet, round, and full. Coming forward he saw a violet lying on the planking of the deck ; she had evidently dropped it from the great bunch pinned to her cloak. He picked it up and went on, turning in by the door that leads to the purser's office, B deck, and the stairs leading down to the saloon and dining-room.

His cabin was on B deck, forward, just under the bridge, and with two big ports, one giving a view right ahead ; a single *cabin de luxe* with a bathroom opening aft, large and well-furnished as all the *Astrid's* cabins are. He placed the violet on a book-ledge and then began to unpack.

Though well-to-do, he had no valet. He preferred looking after himself. Under thirty and good-looking, of the bronzed military type, you would have said, watching him, "Here is an old bachelor in the making, almost made." He explored the lockers to see that they were dustless, stowed his shirts, handkerchiefs, and ties on the shelves, coats on the hangers in the wardrobe, and so on, finishing by fixing up a gadget by the door for holding odds and ends. Yes, decidedly, a bachelor confirmed, or at least in the process of confirmation.

The violet lying on the shelf lay unnoticed. He had forgotten it, this less than trifle picked up at the prompting of the moment, and on account of a girl who had made a momentary impression upon him.

II.

JUST so, but she impressed him again that night, and the impression somehow carried with it the perfume of a violet.

The two hundred passengers of the *Astrid* were crushing down the broad saloon stairs to dinner. Fat Dutchwomen resplendent in the pearls of the East, thin ones, Frenchwomen, a crowd of English bound for Algiers, an American or two—and the Girl.

She was going down the stairs right in front of Moulton. He noticed the perfect curves of her white neck and the fact that she was unaccompanied, also the extreme grace of her shingled head, and the fact that the rippling hair was of the colour of phosphor bronze.

He sat at the purser's table and she at the chief engineer's, and they were in view one of the other.

Yes. She was pretty beyond doubt, but there were girls even prettier amongst the passengers of the *Astrid*—and yet——

No, it was not the question of looks ; line, form, and colour reveal the beauties or imperfections of the body, but movement tells of the mind—the soul. Her movements had fascinated him unconsciously

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from the first. The way she stood at the passport table, the way she turned, held her head, shifted her cloak; and now it was the same.

Watch people eat, and if they are unguarded in their movements you will learn more of their character than a page of confessions could give you. He watched her, and as he watched he became aware of the fact that she was observing him too.

Paying scarcely any attention to the man beside her, she seemed to be taking stock of all the people in her vicinity; it seemed to him as though she were turning them over in her mind, and criticizing them unfavourably, dismissing each as not worthy of her regard—yet her eyes returned to his, and, he imagined, not without some interest, some leaning towards friendliness

III.

"ARE you going to Algiers?"

They had passed from the saloon, where coffee was being served, to the starboard promenade deck, and the question was hers.

"No," said Moulton, "I'm going to Genoa."

"So'm I."

"And after Genoa?"

Moulton, leaning on the teak rail, tea-cup in hand, caught her profile, the shrug of her shoulders settling her furs, then her full face.

"After Genoa," said she, "I'm going, I don't know exactly where. And you?"

"Me. I'm going to Monte Carlo."

They took chairs and sat for a moment watching some of the deck hands rigging the canvas screen that would turn the deck into a dance-room. Just a word at the coffee table where he had handed her a cup and they were friends—at least acquaintances—at all events, not strangers.

"Do you play?" asked she, suddenly turning towards him.

"At Monte?"

"Yes."

"No. At least, never for more than a few francs. I haven't the gambling instinct—about the only vice I haven't got."

She sat silent for a moment, and he watched her profile in the light of the electrics and noticed how, suddenly, her face had changed, become stern, with lips compressed, the face of Themis rather than that of a young girl.

"You may be thankful that you have not got it," said she, "but even so, and knowing, as you must, all the misery that place has caused, why do you go there at all—I mean into the Casino? You are just like a lot of people I know. If you called them gamblers they would take a libel action against you, and they *aren't* gamblers; all the same, they 'go to the Rooms' just for fun, lose a few hundred francs just for fun, support the place just for fun. I'm bitter about it, and I have reason. My very best friend was ruined there. He had gone through the war unharmed, only to be ruined in that beastly place, and now he is in worse than prison."

"How's that?" asked Moulton.

"I can't tell you," she said, "I can't explain things. The story is not mine to tell, and I would not have mentioned it, only that the name of Monte Carlo made me see red. I can only say that this man was well off, young, and going to be married, and that in one week Monte Carlo left him a beggar, with the choice of exile or suicide. That's all. Look, the band is coming out."

He watched the bandsmen taking their places by the saloon companion-way door, and now the deck was filling with people to the tuning-up of the violins, and the girl, rising from her chair, was pulling her cloak round her shoulders.

"I never dance," she said. "At least, now."

Moulton watched her as she passed through the crowd and vanished below. She had intrigued him vastly. So young, so pretty, yet so extraordinarily serious and different from other girls. A tragedy had flattened her life out, he felt sure of that, and almost sure that the tragedy was that of the man—that "very best friend" who was ruined at Monte. She had been in love with him without any doubt, it was her story she was telling as well as that of the ruined man, hence the bitterness.

Well, it was none of Moulton's affair, and yet, somehow, when he had turned in that night his mind could not keep off it, and when he dropped to sleep it pursued him.

He was in a church waiting to act as best man to this charming girl and the bridegroom was late. Someone said he had lost all his money at Monte Carlo, and he, Moulton, was consoling the bride-to-be—then he awoke to the fact that the ship had a roll on and that unsecured trifles in the bathroom were fetching loose.

IV.

HE did not see her again till they were through the Gut of Gibraltar and the ship was running on an even keel; then for a whole long afternoon he had her to himself.

He had taken it badly, just as a nigger takes the measles. There was nothing in the world for him but her phosphor-bronze hair, her grey-blue eyes, the rug he was tucking round her knees—yet his manner showed nothing of this.

"And to-morrow morning," said she, "we shall be in Algiers. We stop there five hours; are you going ashore?"

"Are you?"

"Yes. There is someone I want to see, a friend, staying at the Hôtel d'Oran. I asked the purser where it was, and he says it is in the Arab town close to the landing stage. I thought perhaps that if you were going ashore——" She stopped.

"Yes?"

"Well, I don't like to give you the trouble, but if you wouldn't mind walking with me there——"

"Mind!" cried Moulton. "Of course I wouldn't mind. Delighted. Is that rug comfortable?"

She went below after tea was served and did not appear at dinner. He waited on deck till after ten on the chance that she might come up, and then retired disconsolate, yet buoyed up by the prospect of that journey ashore with her to-morrow to the Hôtel d'Oran.

But he could not sleep.

There were things that kept him awake other than the passion for her which had sprung up like a miraculously growing plant. Who was she, what was she, and who was the friend she had to meet? He had found out her name, Chillingham, entered on the ship's passenger list as of London. That told him nothing. Then in the long conversation that afternoon she had spoken of the ship

The girl, rising from her chair, was pulling her cloak round her shoulders. "I never dance," she said. "At least, now."

as though she were an expert in ship matters, and one thing she had said which struck him strangely. "Your cabin is on B deck, and of course it has a bathroom like the others?"

She must have found out in some way the position of his cabin—maybe she had seen him entering or leaving it, but why the inquiry about the bathroom? He remembered her dispute with the steward on starting. Was she jealous that he had a bathroom and she none?

He fell asleep on the unsolved proposition, awaking to find the cabin filled with sunlight and the siren of the *Astrid* saluting the heights of Algiers.

V.

SHE was waiting for him after breakfast at the gangway leading down to the floating landing stage. They don't ask you for passports at Algiers, at

least when you land from any of the short-staying ships, and Miss Chillingham was aware of this fact, for she stated it. She seemed to know all about the place and its customs, just as she knew all about the ship and the disposition of its cabins, and if Moulton had not been blind he might have shied, or at least blinked, at any adventure ashore with a stranger so intriguing and so full to the ordinary mind of suggestions.

But, blind or clear-sighted, no man shies at pleasure, and the whole of this business was a sheer delight; helping her across the division between the lighters that made up the landing stage, fending off the dirty

Arab beggar children, walking beside her up the long slope that leads to the high level above the arcades, inquiring for the hotel—all this was sheer delight. Also it was hot work in the blazing sun; however, there was a cold bath waiting for him at the Hôtel d'Oran.

It is situated near the fruit market, a dingy structure possessing a courtyard always littered with luggage, luggage that seems to belong to people in flight from the amenities of the hotel.

At the desk, behind which a distracted-looking clerk was disputing with an American woman the rate of exchange on the dollar, Miss Chillingham inquired for her friend.

M. Raymond Martin was not staying at the hotel. Oh, yes, on second thoughts he was—but he was out—but he might have returned—would Mademoiselle follow the page and see for herself?

Moulton watched her passing down a passage leading from the courtyard to the

Moulton saw a door open and a young man come out, saw her fly into his arms, saw them disappear.

salle à manger, saw a door open and a young man come out, saw her fly into his arms, saw them disappear.

He sat down on a bench.

Well, that was that. Raymond Martin. The man without doubt who had been ruined at Monte.

He felt done in, betrayed—worse, made use of.

Feeling nervous, perhaps, of being alone in a strange city, she had brought him ashore to pilot her to her lover.

A big Saratoga trunk standing before him told him all this in plain language till he remembered the cardinal fact he had forgotten. The fact that she knew nothing of his feeling for her.

His new-born love had been too young to speak. No, the fault was not hers. Fate alone was responsible for the business, and against Fate it is useless to grumble, useless to kick.

He lit a cigarette.

Twenty minutes passed. Then she appeared coming down the passage, followed by the other.

What a good-looking fellow he was, this Raymond, young, bronzed, full of good spirits, rather shabbily dressed, it is true, but still a gentleman! She introduced him, and then, after a word or two of conversation, they left the place, taking their way past the flower market and back to the ship.

Raymond was staying in Algiers, but he

would come on board for a cocktail and a chat before the ship started. She was due out at noon, and it was now fifteen minutes past ten.

On deck, amidst the crowd of new passengers bound for Genoa, Moulton left the pair, going off to the smoke-room to brood over a cigar, determined in his mind that he was done with women for ever and ever, unconscious of the fact that a certain woman was by no means done with him.

VI.

HE was finishing his second cigar when the last warning blast of the siren brought him on deck. The landing stage was already being drawn up; clinging on to the ship's side, regardless of the notice about the propellers, men in boats selling carpets, rugs, opera-glasses, and oranges were doing a last deal with people leaning out of the lower ports, and half-a-dozen people on the lighters were waving good-bye to friends on board. There was no sign of Raymond; he must have gone ashore at the second warning of the siren, half an hour ago. No sign of Miss Chillingham.

He waited, watching the ship being manœuvred out of the harbour; then, Algiers astern and the tramp of the engines telling of full speed ahead, he went to his cabin, closed his door, and took off his coat to wash his hands. The bathroom door was a tiny bit open; it opened suddenly and fully and a man appeared. It was Raymond.

"Good God!" cried Moulton. "You! Why, the ship has started!"

The full meaning of the situation did not strike him at once. He fancied that Raymond, wishing to see him, had strayed into the cabin, gone into the bathroom to wash his hands, and got carried off, a fancy that vanished at once as Raymond, stepping forward, shot the bolt of the cabin door.

"You'll excuse me," said Raymond, "but I'm an absolutely desperate man, a hunted stag, a deserter from the Foreign Legion. Get me? Absolutely driven, or I wouldn't have arranged this trick."

Moulton took in the whole business at once and fully.

He sat down on the edge of the bed and Raymond took a chair.

"How long have you been here?" asked Moulton.

"One hour, hiding in the bathroom, and a dam' Java steward tried to get in, but I held the door and he thought it was you and went away."

"You came on board with Miss Chillingham, taking advantage of the fact that visitors to the ship were not required to show passports?"

"That's it," said Raymond.

"And mixing up in the crowd you found your way to my cabin and hid. Did Miss Chillingham tell you where to hide?"

"She told me that there was a bathroom to your cabin and that it was Cabin Five, B Deck. She said when I'd explained to you she was sure you wouldn't mind; she said I'd better hide in the bathroom for fear of the stewards till you turned up—and here you are," said Raymond with a laugh.

Moulton contemplated him for a moment. There was something youthful and joyous about Raymond despite all his troubles, something that disarmed anger and blunted irritation. All the same the situation was a difficult one to swallow, made none the easier by the fact that Mary Chillingham had devised it—or, more strictly speaking, advised it.

"You come to me like this," said Moulton, becoming calmer, "and of course I can't refuse you help, at least such help as I can afford you. But before we go farther, will you kindly give me some account of yourself and what has brought you to this position? It seems to me a queer bargain has been forced on me, but at all events I would like to see the invoice of the goods."

"Rather," said Raymond. "Yes, of course. You see, it's this way. Mary——"

"Will you kindly not refer to Miss Chillingham in any remarks you have to make?" said Moulton, icily. "I only want to know about yourself."

"All right," said Raymond. "I expect you're angry with her, but it's not her fault. We were both desperate. All my fault. It's that cursed Monte that did me in. I had five thousand, and I went there and they scooped the lot. There was nothing left for me but a hole in the water, or selling buttons on a card in Fleet Street. A French chap told me to join the Legion, and I took his advice. What I chiefly want to get free for," said Raymond, "is to scrag that chap, inveigle him from France over the Italian border and scrag him. However, that's neither here nor there. What matters is, I hadn't been in the Legion a year when Uncle George pops off and leaves me a hundred thousand—he thought I was in Africa, and I was.

"A year and six months I've been in the Legion, I mean in hell, and we have been six months arranging this stunt. Money was sent to me, and I got clothes and had them hid in the house of a Jew by the Tlemcen gate at Sidi. Then news came to me of the day I ought to make the start. I shed my Legionnaire togs at the Jew's and got into these civies. Nothing is easier if you have money than escaping from the

Legion, at least for the first few hours; you have just to change and walk to the railway station; there you'll find Arab police and military police, but they can't spot you if you carry it off properly and if you aren't marked in any way. Where the Legion grips you by the throat is at the frontiers and at the sea—when you try to go aboard a ship.

"You are asked for your papers, those cursed papers, and for your passport.

"Well, I just went to the station and took train. I didn't go to Oran, that's a mug's game. I went by direction to Algiers and put up at that hotel. I've been there nearly a week. Then this morning you see how it worked, simple as anything. Just came on board with you and her, no questions asked, though I saw some rotten police standing by the entrance to the landing stage—just came on board and there you are."

VII.

"YES," said Moulton, "it was simple enough; you are here and the ship at sea, but it seems to me it's simple because you have done nothing much, only extended the frontier."

"How d'you mean?"

"I mean you can't land at Genoa without a passport."

"Oh, can't I?" said Raymond with a laugh.

Men in boats selling carpets, rugs, opera-glasses, and oranges were doing a last deal with people leaning out of the lower ports.

"No, you can't, and it's not a laughing matter, either for you or for me, for, though I'm willing to help you up to the hilt, it seems to me——"

"Yes?"

"Nothing," said Moulton. He had been about to say that it seemed to him he was in a very false position, but the words would not come. She had used him for the escape of this man, whom she would marry, no doubt, should he get free, she had put him to inconvenience and perhaps had put him in a dangerous position so that his rival might benefit, but she had done it unconscious of the fact that he cared for her deeply, so he kept down the words that were rising and went back.

"Unless you have a false passport, you can't possibly land."

"And I haven't," cried Raymond. "I'm not going to bother the passport people. You see, I know Genoa harbour; I've been there twice and sailed it in the regatta, and there's a fellow waiting for me. This is the dodge. If you let me lie doggo here, we get to Genoa early the day after to-morrow morning. I'll leave the cabin and come along the deck with my collar up, a passenger come up for an early cigarette. Get aft and drop over. The propellers will be going dead slow, or, maybe, stopped. You see, I'm used to the water. Chater will be waiting for me."

"Who's Chater?"

"Chap who owns a fourteen-tonner with an auxiliary engine. The whole job has been in train for more than three months, all worked out like clockwork, all her doing——"

"Yes, I can see that," said Moulton, grimly.

HE was thinking to himself, what a woman for a man to own as a helper and a friend—let alone a lover—but his face showed nothing of his thoughts.

"I can see that, but now comes the question of what we are to do at the moment. We have almost two days and two nights before us—the devil!" He had suddenly come upon a fact that had not occurred to the light-hearted Raymond.

"What's up?" asked the latter.

"The Javanese boys, the stewards. If I leave the cabin, Achmat, that's my room boy, will be in to tidy up things; he's always popping in and out. He's looking for his tip."

"I can hide in the bathroom same as I did just now."

"You can't. Achmat will see me leave the cabin—he's always squatting on his heels in the alleyway—then he'll come in, maybe, and find the bathroom door bolted on the inside, then he'll scratch his head and call Piroli, or some of his friends, and they'll discuss this black magic and go to the chief steward, and then—— Besides, look how we are fixed. You seem to think that blessed bathroom is a certain refuge. It's not. Leaving aside to-day, I shall have to leave here in the morning for breakfast, and then Achmat will be in to make the bed and tidy up. You can no more stop that than you can stop the sun or the tide. He comes in, makes the bed, and finds the bathroom door bolted from the inside. Well, there you are."

"It seems to me," said Raymond, "the only way out—but then I wouldn't like to bother you to do that."

"What?"

"Well, if you could possibly stay in bed, put in an *æger*, so to speak—it's only two days."

"I'm damned if I do," said Moulton, the harlequin position so suggested to him tapping suddenly sources of hot wrath. Wrath against Mary Chillingham, Raymond, the ship, himself, and the whole position, but mainly against Mary.

That thinker-out of plots and plans! Could this be one of her suggestions?

"No, of course not," said Raymond. "I didn't expect you would. Wouldn't do it myself. You see, we never worked this thing out to its last conclusions; it seemed so simple to hide in a bathroom, but it isn't. We must think of something else. Listen!"

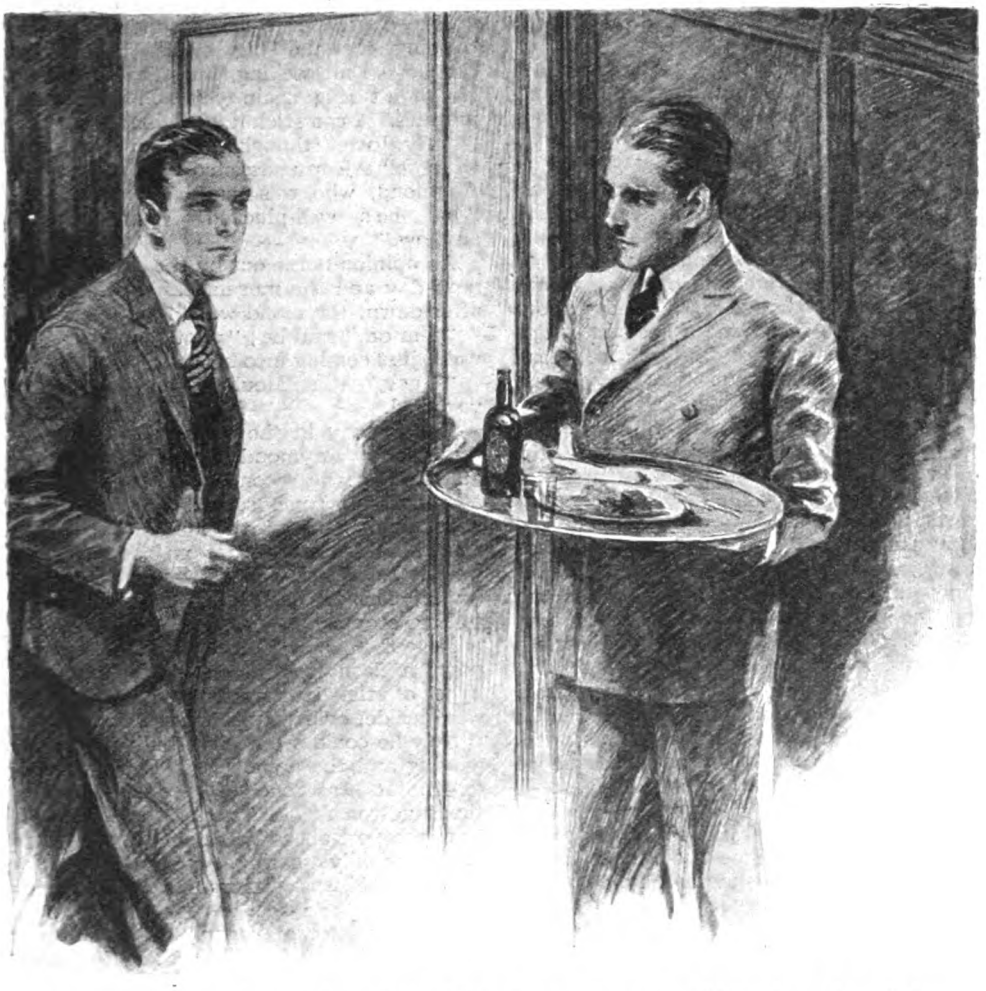
"It's the luncheon gong," said Moulton, "and I'm pretty hungry, but, seems to me, I can't leave here—not safely, anyhow."

"Risk it," said Raymond, taking a cigarette from his case. "Risk it. Damn it, I don't mind. I'm fed up with the whole business. Go down, and if Achmat turns up I'll try bribery—or scraggery. Shove him through the port. Go on, old man, and have your luncheon, and bring a banana for Raymond."

"No," said Moulton, "you'd never bribe Achmat, he couldn't understand what you meant. Get into the bathroom and shut the door and bolt it. When I knock three times, open."

Ten minutes later the knock came and Raymond emerged to find luncheon. That is to say, a tray with a plate of goulash, a roll, butter, cheese, and a sweet—enough for one, also a bottle of tonic water.

They divided the food. It was not enough for two, but they made out. Then, Raymond returning to the bathroom, Moulton rang for Achmat and ordered the things to be taken away.



Raymond emerged to find luncheon. That is to say, a tray with a plate of goulash, a roll, butter, cheese, and a sweet—enough for one, also a bottle of tonic water. They divided the food.

VIII.

"IT seems to me," said Raymond later that day, "that if you will carry on this business—and, mind you, I don't want you to do so—but if you *will* carry on, it would be better to do as I said before and take to your bed. You see, Achmat will begin to wonder at seeing you up and about, yet unable to leave the place. Specially at dinner time; and it's just as comfy in bed, it seems to me, as anywhere else in this stuffy old cabin."

"Maybe you're right," said Moulton.

He undressed and got into bed, and away from the background of his mind shot up a childish memory of a warm summer afternoon when he was sent to bed early for some childish fault. The memory did not soothe him.

Nor did Raymond's talk as the latter sat on the little settee under the side port and smoked cigarettes.

Raymond had a mental relationship to Archie—that is to say, Archie without the genius of Wodehouse and the background of Jeeves, but the contents of his mind troubled Moulton less than its attitude; apologetic, humble, anxious to please and, if possible, amuse the bedridden one.

And She was going to bind herself for ever with this mind in holy matrimony. The thought in some curious way relieved the monotony and oppressive gloom of the situation. So would she suffer in the years

to come, surely, inevitably, after the paint and gilt of wedlock had rubbed off and the glamour faded.

He dropped into a doze, to be awakened by the dinner gong, and, Raymond having retired to the bathroom, Achmat was rung for.

IX.

IF you know the Java servant, you will know that the bathroom has a fascination for him beyond other rooms, especially if there are brass taps and gadgets to be polished. There were lots of these in the bathrooms of the *Astrid*, and above everything else there was a spit-and-polish chief bedroom steward, a Dyak who had once been a warrior on the Itang river, and whose present god was Sheen.

Now, Achmat had cabin Number [illegible] to answer for, and he had been kept [illegible] of the bathroom for quite a number of hours. He had come along, polishing cloth in hand, at eleven o'clock, and found the place occupied (Raymond in residence), and now at seven-thirty, having cleared away the dinner things and tray, and tidied a few odds and ends, he was advancing to the bathroom door when Moulton called him back, shaking his head and indicating that he was going to get up and dress and wanted the cabin clear.

"All the same," said Raymond, when he had gone, "we can't play the game twice. If the bounder tries to get in again and we baulk him, he's sure to smell a rat—I know!"

He got down on his knees and examined the bed. It was a true bed, not a bunk, and there was room underneath for a man to hide—or wasn't there?

Raymond, on his knees, came to the decision that there was, then he began to get under.

There wasn't. But "wasn't" is a compound word written all over English history to be crossed out by the word "was."

It took nearly half a minute in the doing, and half a minute is for some adventures a long time. Then a voice came from under the bed.

"I once read a book called 'Flat Land,' by a mathematical Johnnie. I feel as if I was there. Respiration is difficult. Ring for the bounder and get the business over."

Moulton rang—and rang—and rang, raising at last a Dutch-Javanese who looked like a golliwog and was evidently Achmat's locum tenens. Moulton explained that he wanted Achmat to put the bathroom to rights, and the locum nodded, vanished, and returned presently with a whisky-and-soda on a tray.

"It's better than nothing,' said the voice under the bed. "Don't scoff it. Keep it for Raymond. No, I won't come out. It's hell, but it's nothing to what I'll have to do the day after to-morrow morning. It's training for the big event. Meanwhile, I believe I'm swelling, but that's a detail. No, don't ring again yet. Give him ten minutes. I can stick it all right."

"By Jove," thought Moulton that night as he fell asleep unassisted by the snores of Raymond, who was bunking on the floor, "but he's well-plucked. Worth saving, anyhow."

An opinion borne out by the events of the next day and the morning after when, just after dawn, Raymond woke him.

"I'm off," said he; "pilot's on board and we're just coming into harbour."

"Luck," said Moulton, and the other vanished.

Moulton lay in the vague dawn that lit the cabin. Raymond would have to go aft through the second class and find the after-rail. If some second-class passenger were hanging about the rail all would be ruined. If not, a dive from the after-rail would be easy. He listened. He could scarcely hear the engines. Now they seemed to have stopped.

He got up and looked through the side port; a flash from the still revolving red light of the breakwater told him they were inside, evidently in charge of a tug.

Now he could see a great bulk they were passing and the name *Conte Verde* written on it. It was one of the twenty-five-thousand-ton South American boats. Now from the port ahead he could see the Silos Wharf rapidly nearing.

Raymond was either free by now or arrested.

An hour later at early breakfast everything seemed quiet He heard nothing said of a stowaway having been found, though he questioned the chief engineer, who was breakfasting, on the question of stowaways in general, and, satisfied that his cabin companion was either dead or free, he went ashore. He saw nothing of Miss Chillingham as he left the ship. He neither looked nor asked for her. He never wanted to see her again.

X.

IT was a fortnight later when one day a lady called at his hotel in Monte Carlo.

"Raymond told me your hotel here, and I have come to see you and thank you. I didn't see you the morning we disembarked at Genoa because I didn't land till you were all ashore. Raymond is safe. Can I ever, ever thank you enough?"

"It's nothing," said Moulton, rather stiffly. "I only did what anyone would have done."

"Don't say that," said she. "I know of all you went through for him, and there's

someone else wants to thank you: the girl who was engaged to him long ago and who has stuck to him through thick and thin——"

"But see here," cried Moulton; "aren't you—I mean——" He stopped. A great light was breaking on him, some instinct had suddenly told him the truth.

"I thought you were engaged to him—at least, you know what I mean."

"My brother—I mean, my half-brother—though he has always been to me as a brother."

"I didn't know. Didn't want to. When he spoke of you I told him to change the subject. I was sore and savage—can't you see why? I didn't want him to have you. I wanted you myself." He took both her hands. "There, it's out."

"And yet you helped him!"

"Yes. I helped him to rob me of the thing I loved best."

"But he hasn't," said she.

And, if an inopportune hotel waiter who blundered into the room a few minutes later could have been questioned, he would entirely have confirmed her words.

"Raymond is safe. Can I ever, ever thank you enough?"
"It's nothing," said Moulton, rather stiffly. "I only did what anyone would have done."

THE PRINCE'S BIRTHDAY PRESENT

By

Anthony Armstrong

("A. A." of "Punch")

Illustrated by
I. G. ILLINGWORTH

ONCE upon a time there was a King and he had a son who was very, very clever. In fact, he was so smart that the shopkeepers would only accept cash. And he had had to take to Patience because none of the courtiers would play cards with him.

Well, one day, when Prince Pointedface and his father were discussing affairs of state, there was a sort of flash, and

"I *think* that's a Wunk," said the Fairy, with a sigh not unmixed with pride.

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Prince Pointedface looked very cunning. "Are you ready, then?" he said, as the Fairy poised her wand. "Well, then, I wish for three more wishes."

a Fairy appeared between them. They were not startled at all, because fairies had a habit of travelling about like that. The King merely changed the subject in a polite fashion and remarked that it was a fine day for appearing.

"Yes, very fine day for it!" agreed the Fairy. "Let me see," she went on, getting to business right away, "the Prince comes of age in a week's time, doesn't he?"

"He does!" answered the old King, who knew all about that; for his son had been making a good thing out of it for the last two months.

"Well," said the Fairy, turning to the young man, "I've got a birthday present for you now, as I did not attend the customary fairy gathering round your cradle."

"Oh, that didn't really matter!" said the Prince, in a self-satisfied tone. "The others gave me all the usual presents, Health, and Wealth, and Long Life, and Happiness——"

"Quite, quite," interrupted the Fairy. "I was down to have given you Good Looks. But if you're satisfied——"

The Prince gave a start and glanced sideways at a mirror. He considered that remark a nasty dig.

"Well, of course," he began, "if you'd like——"

"Oh, it's too late *now*," went on the Fairy, scoring all along the line. "Much," she added, looking more closely at him.

The old King coughed meaningly at this point. It seemed to him the conversation was taking rather a personal tone.

"Well, what are you going to give me now?" demanded Prince Pointedface, changing the subject with some alacrity.

"I am going to grant you three wishes."

"Oh, *that!*" replied the Prince in a bored fashion—as if he had been offered a silver-plated toast-rack.

"Don't say '*that*' like that!" said the Fairy, crossly. "It's a very nice present."

"Quite, quite. Very nice," again interrupted the King, rather anxiously. "Say 'Thank you,' my boy!"

"Can I wish for anything I like?" asked the Prince, becoming slightly interested.

"Anything."

"And you promise you'll grant it?"

"Of course," snapped the Fairy, getting annoyed.

"You're sure you'll be able to?" continued Prince Pointedface, suspiciously.

The Fairy snorted indignantly—if fairies do that sort of thing. "Look here," she began. "You sha'n't have them if you're going——"

"Sorry, sorry! No offence," hurriedly apologized the Prince. "Well, my first wish is to have a Wunk."

The Fairy, who had raised her wand in readiness, lowered it again.

"A *what?*" she said. "I don't think I quite caught it."

"A Wunk," said the Prince, who was a young man of original ideas.

"A Wunk?" repeated the Fairy, taken aback. "Wunk! Wunk!" She paused thoughtfully. "Wunk! What's it like?"

"Well, that's what I've often wondered," replied the Prince, amiably.

"Wouldn't you prefer a guinea-pig, my boy," put in the old King, anxiously. "The stables are rather full at the moment——"

"No, I want a Wunk. I've never had one."

"*Is* there such a thing?" asked the Fairy.

"I shouldn't think so," replied the Prince, happily, "but there will be soon, won't there; because you promised you'd grant——"

"Oh, all right," replied the Fairy, testily, and, raising her wand once more, she shut her eyes. Then she opened them again.

"Would you mind repeating it?" she asked.

"Wunk," said the Prince.

"How do you spell it?"

"W-u-n-k."

"Er—thanks," said the Fairy, and shut her eyes once more.

After some thought she waved her wand in a dubious fashion.

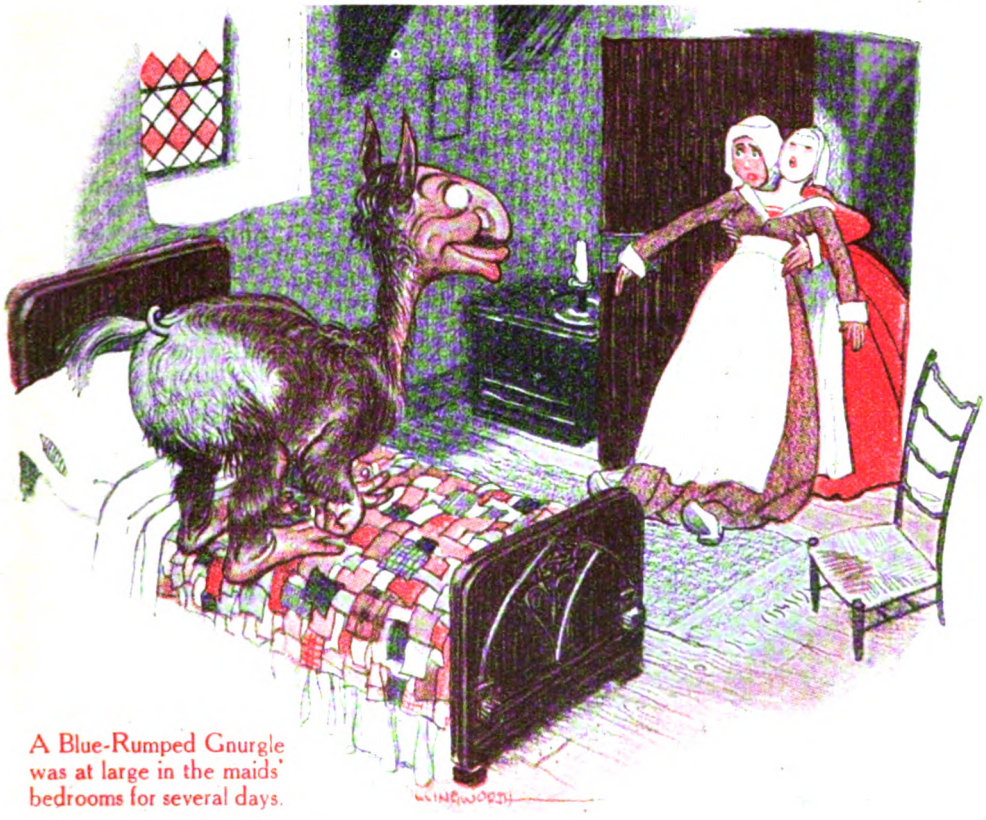
A thing like a six-legged porcupine with a rabbit's head appeared in front of the King, who started violently.

"Bother! That's not it," said the Fairy, and hastily abolished it.

"I'm sure a guinea-pig would be better," quavered the King in a faint voice.

The Fairy with wrinkled brow lifted her wand once more. "It's by no means easy," she observed severely as she shut her eyes.

The Prince incautiously wished himself elsewhere; but, having omitted to specify any destination, he at once found himself, still wearing his best clothes, in the worst part of the Royal Piggeries.



A Blue-Rumped Gnurgle was at large in the maids' bedrooms for several days.

only to open them again after a long pause and remark: "This really ought to count two wishes!"

The Prince merely laughed rather nastily and the Fairy, having given him a lofty stare, shut her eyes once more and waved her wand.

A creature, with the head of a pelican and the body of a sea-lion standing on the long legs of an ostrich, was suddenly between them.

The King, trembling violently, rang a bell for the Royal Valet and ordered a large beaker of wine.

"I *think* that's a Wunk," said the Fairy, with a sigh not unmixed with pride.

Prince Pointedface surveyed the apparition from every angle.

"I think it must be," he admitted at last. "It certainly isn't anything else."

The Fairy put a few finishing touches to the Wunk in the shape of a pair of eagle's wings.

"Yes, I'm certain it's a Wunk," she said at last, "though I've never been asked for one before."

"I hope, my boy," put in the King severely—he was feeling better after the wine—"that you'll look after its—er—feeding and so on yourself. By the way, what does it eat?"

"Er—— What does it?" queried the Prince, turning to its creator.

"Don't ask *me!*" snapped the Fairy. "*You* wished for it!"

At this point the Wunk nearly solved the question by a nasty snap of its beak. Apparently Royal Valet was its favourite dish.

"I don't think I like it!" said the Prince, drawing back a hurried pace. "In fact," he added, "I wish I hadn't asked for it."

Like a flash the Fairy waved her wand and the Wunk was not.

"You haven't," she observed. "And that's your second wish, by the way," she added, malevolently. "Come on, now. Only one more." She was beginning to dislike Prince Pointedface.

"Oh, is that so?" said Prince Pointedface, who didn't like being hustled.

"Yes, and hurry up," snapped the Fairy.

"And no more Wunks, my boy," added the King.

Prince Pointedface looked very cunning.

"Are you ready, then?" he said, as the

Fairy poised her wand. "Well, then, I wish for three more wishes."

"Hey! That's not fair," cried the King, indignantly, as the Fairy stood speechless with surprise.

"Oh, and why not?" coldly demanded the Prince.

"It's not done, my boy. It's never been done. Your grandfather and your great-grandfather would never have done such a thing; though they both had dealings with fairies. In fact, I myself once, when walking through a Magic Wood——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted the Prince, who had heard the one about the Magic Wood several times.

"You—you can't do that," flamed the Fairy, finding her voice and losing her temper.

They took him off after a while to a quiet room in a far wing of the Palace, and there he still is.

"Even apart from your promise," began Prince Pointedface in judicial tones, "which many would consider morally binding, I presume my action is quite legal? But shall we consult the Vizier?"

Choking with wrath, the Fairy waved her wand.

"There!" she screeched, in too much of a temper to see the further possibilities of the business. "Now hurry up and have your next three wishes. But I'll never give you a present again."

"Only two wishes," pleasantly corrected the Prince, who was thoroughly enjoying himself. "My third wish of this series will, of course, be for three more."

"My boy, my boy," said the King, horror and admiration struggling together in his voice. "How you remind me of your dear mother! Her idea of honesty was——"

"I think," interrupted the Prince to the practically speechless Fairy, "it was very nice of me not to have wished for more than three. In fact, now I come to think of it, the first of my new wishes will be for fifty more wishes to be granted."

The Fairy found her voice and said things about Prince Pointedface that ought never to have been mentioned by a lady. She stamped up and down and spoke so angrily and rapidly that the old King, whose wife had only died a short while before, timidly said, "Yes, m'dear," on at least two occasions from sheer force of habit.

In the end the Fairy with one last blast of venom cried: "And have all the rest of the wishes you want—I promise you'll get 'em all right—and may you enjoy them—but not if I can help it, you mean little——"

The rest of the sentence, since she disappeared in an angry puff of smoke, was finished in fairyland, where no doubt it caused a bit of a sensation.

The King and his son were silent for some while after she had gone. Silence, in fact, seemed rather nice. Then the Prince, a bit shaken, said: "Well, you know, I rather wish I'd consulted the Vizier before I did that!"

"But you did," replied the King. "You called him in just before your third wish, and he told you it was quite possible but inadvisable."

" Why, so I did," said the Prince in surprise. " I'd forgotten. No, I hadn't. I say, father : that was a wish and it was *granted*."

" What was a wish, my boy ? " asked the poor old King, rather puzzled.

" My saying just now I wished I'd consulted the Vizier. I can see I shall have to be careful." And he went out thoughtfully.

Many times that day did the Prince realize he had to be careful. For the Fairy, it seemed, by way of revenge, hung on his lightest word, and if it could be called a wish granted it, in as awkward a manner as possible. For instance, when he mentioned quite casually at lunch, thinking of the crops, that he wished it would rain—rain it did, a regular downpour right inside the Banqueting Hall, and all the Court got wet through and most of the food was spoilt, before the astounded Prince realized what had happened and thought of turning it off. Everybody looked so angry about it that the Prince, much shaken, incautiously wished himself elsewhere ; but, having omitted in his confusion to specify any destination, he at once found himself, still wearing his best clothes, in the worst part of the Royal Piggeries.

By the end of a couple of days the Court in general was unanimous in condemning the Prince's new gift ; for they soon realized it affected them in no small measure. The stout Court Chamberlain, in particular, was very bitter, after finding himself translated from the Throne Room to a distant wood where the Prince was hunting, merely because His Highness had expressed a cheery desire that " that old pudding of a Court Chamberlain could be with them, as it might reduce his fat a bit." So swiftly did the Fairy work that the Chamberlain arrived in time to hear nearly the whole of the Prince's remarks, which did not make for good feeling.

In addition to this liability to unexpected displacement occasioned by the Prince's ill-advised small-talk, the courtiers found life in the Palace still more hazardous because of the presence of strange animals, which, like the Wunk, Prince Pointedface had created out of curiosity, and had forgotten to annihilate. In fact, a Blue-Rumped Gnurgle was at large in the maids' bedrooms for several days, till the Royal Housekeeper respectfully asked for the Prince to wish it elsewhere. The Prince, who was busy, sent it to one or two places where it wasn't in the least wanted, before he eventually demolished it. And then there was the Jellyhock, which the Prince manufactured to enliven family prayers.

The weather, too, developed an amazing variety owing to the incautious Prince Pointedface's conversational remarks on the subject, nor was it by any means confined to the outside of the Palace. As like as not a depression advancing over Iceland one minute would be in the drawing-room the next. One bold Courtier ventured to complain about this, but on the Prince's remarking " I wish you'd shut up " he had shut up—in the manner of a concertina, and the Prince's first attempt at reconstruction, by wishing he'd open out again, could hardly be called a success. He got him right eventually, but the young man was never the same afterwards.

But the climax came when at a Royal Ball the Prince, in conversation with a young lady he had not met before and rather fancied, gallantly though inadvertently expressed a wish to see more of her. Since the ballroom was crowded at the time, there was rather a scandal, which was not helped by the Prince losing his head and expending several wishes in blankets and safety-pins before he finally translated the hysterical damsel to her bedroom. This incident led to the appointment of a Censor of the Royal Wish, whose business it was to follow Prince Pointedface everywhere and nudge him whenever he said " I wish . . ." so that he might fully consider every aspect of his intended remark.

Under this functionary's guidance the Prince started an Account Book of Receipts and Expenditure of Wishes to ensure his keeping a balance in hand. It was a most interesting document.

WHAT would eventually have happened in the Court no one knows. The old King said it was far more disorganizing than the last visit of his mother-in-law, who at the time was suffering from a spell which caused her to turn everything she touched into vanilla ice-cream. Nor did there appear any way out of it, since the Prince, in a moment of enthusiasm, one day had increased his capital to several millions.

But the end came at last, for the vindictive Fairy was still on the watch. The Prince, after a very successful half-hour during which he got his favourite " Patience " out three times running, laughed triumphantly, and then rashly exclaimed, " I wish I could have that half-hour over again ! "

And there the Fairy had him. He had the half-hour over again complete in every detail, even down to his triumphant laugh and the rash exclamation, which in its turn started off a third similar half-hour, and that a fourth. . . .

They took him off after a while to a quiet room in a far wing of the Palace, and there he still is. The Court Mathematician has computed to the relief of all that his existing store of wishes will last him out.

THE GREAT CHARACTERS OF FICTION—

"WHICH SHOULD I MOST LIKE TO HAVE CREATED?"

"What character, in all literature, would you most like to have created, and why?" This is the question that has been addressed from "The Strand Magazine" to our leading novelists, whose varied and interesting replies we are privileged to print below.

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's answer is characteristic of him as a writer and a man, though, indeed, the two are really always one:—

I think Colonel
newcome, as the
ideal hybrid
gentleman would
have my vote
A C D

MR. H. G. WELLS.

An early, notable reply was this despatch from Mr. Wells:—

Congratulations on an amusing idea.
Falstaff
Why is to difficult.
H. G. Wells

MR. ARNOLD BENNETT.

At first Mr. Arnold Bennett resisted, was "unable" to tackle the problem set him, but at the second time of asking did so thus:—

Very well. I yield.

Alyosha.

Yours sincerely,

Arnold Bennett

Who, the general reader will ask, is Alyosha? and then he remembers. He figures in that great novel of Dostoieffsky, "The Brothers Karamazoff."

MR. JOHN MASEFIELD.

Mr. John Masefield both names his character and says "why" in:—

Homer's Achilles, because he seems to be the most alive.

Yours sincerely
J. Masefield.

MR. H. DE VERE STACPOOLE.

D'Artagnan, because he is the finest and most vivid character in romantic fiction (at least I think so).

MR. W. B. MAXWELL.

John Inglesant, because he is so fine, so perfect a gentleman. He has a charm and loftiness about him that are conveyed to the reader in a manner that defies analysis. One likes him at the very beginning, when his character is as yet immature ; one likes him at the very end, when it has hardened and taken a form that could not have been foretold ; and one likes him and sympathizes with him throughout the long time that passes between those two points.

MR. E. F. BENSON.

At the present moment I should like best to have created the character which I am trying to create. If that doesn't count, I should choose Gus, in " Ravenshoe." Because that's the only real human child I have ever come across in a book.

How many readers of the present day have read Henry Kingsley's fine novel ?

"IAN HAY."

This is such an enormous question and offers such an illimitable field that one is in danger of getting lost in its mazes. To begin with, no one has read all literature.

I am therefore going to confine myself to the English language, to English fiction, and to English fiction of the Victorian and present eras. (That excludes people like Jean Valjean and Babbitt.)

Next, is the character to be male or female ? I say male. There are definite rules and measurements which you can apply to a male character-drawing ; the female of the species appears to be exempt from these, with the result that it is almost impossible to say whether a female character is credibly drawn or not.

This brings us down to the male character whom I would like best to have created—in other words, my favourite male character in modern English fiction. And I plump for old Vance, in that now sadly neglected masterpiece " Joseph Vance," by William de Morgan. If I had to designate a beautifully drawn female character in addition, I should throw in Lossie Thorpe, of the same book.

MR. TEMPLE THURSTON.

You use the word " create," and for sheer mastery of creation I would sooner have made Sir Willoughby Patterne out of pen, ink, and paper than any character in fiction that I know. This is not to say that " The Egoist " is my favourite novel, for, as is often the case, the greater character study does not make the best tale.

But Sir Willoughby, to me, comes nearer to the naked truth than any character I have read in fiction. Meredith spared nothing in the making of him, and whenever I read " The Egoist " I am aghast at the honesty of his creation.

Photo : Henry Dixon and Son.

"FALSTAFF."

Sir H Beerbohm Tree as Falstaff, and Miss Ellen Terry and Mrs. Kendal as "The Merry Wives of Windsor."

By the Hon. John Collier.

By permission of the Artist.

MR. HUGH WALPOLE.

Yes! There can be no harder question. Of all the characters in fiction, I think I would wish to have created Quixote. If you go outside the novel, then Lear or Hamlet. If you go into the world's literature, then Milton's Satan.

Photo: Eyre and Spottiswoode, Ltd.

"DON QUIXOTE AND MARITORNES AT THE INN."

By Roland Wheelwright.

By permission of the Corporation of Oldham.

MR. GILBERT FRANKAU.

I should have preferred to create Don Juan as Byron saw him, because his Don Juan is at least a protest against the damned hypocrisy, sentimentality, and jazz-time romanticism of this hag-ridden, cinema-staring age. Item: D. J. also loathed democracy and all the ways thereof. Which is mere common sense.

MR. EDGAR JEPSON.

There are many women I should like tc have created because I should like to have loved them, and perhaps even married them; many men whom I should like to have had as friends or comrades.

They are not necessarily the heroes or heroines of the books or dramas in which they play their parts; they are nearly as often the villains or adventuresses. It would have been a job, but I would rather have married Becky Sharp than Amelia; I would rather have had Iago for my comrade than Othello, and I would much rather have had the nurse in "Romeo and Juliet" for my servant than Flaubert's Félicité.

It works out, then, that for me to desire keenly to have created a character in literature, that character must be uncommonly sympathetic to me. I admire Don Quixote, but I should have found him uncommonly tiresome as a friend, for any character I should like to have created must have intelligence.

I have come to the conclusion, therefore, that for me it lies between two characters, Ulysses (Homer's, not Mr. Joyce's) and Julien Sorel. But Julien Sorel has it, because Stendhal builds up his character from the beginning. Ulysses comes to us, like Becky Sharp and Don Quixote and Iago, already made. Julien is to my mind the finest example of character building in literature.

He starts as a peasant boy, and there is a steady development throughout his brief career into an accomplished and formidable man of the world, bound to develop further, but for the accident due to the romantic strain in him which I esteem so highly, into a great man. He has the qualities which appeal to me: he is immensely vital; he has an admirable brain and a dour patience in working out its designs; he has charm; he is a lover whom women do not forget; he is a romantic and an idealist, yet very hard. Moreover, he is a fighter, and his character is developed, with an inevitable development, in a life of struggle in which the odds are heavily against him. He wins through by sheer personality.

Yes, Julien Sorel is the character in all literature which I should most like to have created.

MR. THOMAS BURKE.

Mr. Collins, of "Pride and Prejudice." Mr. Collins is as monumental as any of Dickens's grotesques, and, unlike them, he walks on earth and breathes our air. If you ask my reasons for this choice I can give you none. I only know that if I had created Mr. Collins, I should have gone about in a warm glow ever after.

MR. W. PETT RIDGE.

I should like to be able to claim responsibility for Mrs. Hatt in the novel called " Craven House." I have often tried to write of landladies, but never with anything of the success achieved in Patricia Hamilton's book.

MISS MARJORIE BOWEN.

I'm afraid my favourite characters are all in history and not in fiction. Forced to choose, however, I think I would have liked to have been the creator of Lovelace in " Clarissa Harlowe," because it is a difficult character supremely well done, often copied, never equalled, and lingers in the memory with the force of an actual, very vital, and very attractive personality.

I think Richardson himself felt that vice, in the person of his hero, was more the fascination of his story than virtue in the person of his heroine ; hence that horrible bore, Sir Charles Grandison, written to counteract the wicked charms of Lovelace. But Sir Charles fails hopelessly, of course, in the view of any female reader.

MR. DENIS MACKAIL.

I find it extraordinarily difficult to single out one character for the honour, or possible honour, which you suggest, for I should be equally happy if I had created almost any of the literary figures who really live. Yet I think what would please me as much as anything else would be to create a heroine who was genuinely touching without letting me down and being mawkish.

Here it seems to me that Catriona (Stevenson) and Pauline (Compton Mackenzie's " Guy and Pauline ") would run almost a dead-heat ; but perhaps there would be a shade of choice in favour of Catriona, if for no other reason than that I knew her first.

MR. ROBERT HICHENS.

How can I possibly make sure whom I love best of the many delightful people I have met with in books ? I have thought and thought.

I have remembered the delicious Elizabeth Bennett, the alluring Mrs. Gamp, Becky Sharp, Mrs. Proudie, Mr. Pickwick, Victor Hugo's Bishop in " Les Misérables," Daudet's Tartarin (I delight in him), Our Lady's Juggler, the Barnabas of Anatole France, Don Quixote (an immortal if ever there was one), Balzac's Cousin Pons, and how many more ! And, indeed, I find the task of selection an impossible one.

I cannot tell what character in fiction is my favourite character. But I have found that, in turning over this most horrible problem in my mind, two people continually come to me, seem, indeed, to come before me like shining presences. Both are women. One is Anna Karenina, the other Tess of the D'Urbervilles. These women live for me.

I fell in love with Anna Karenina at the ball, and with Tess at the dairy farm. For more years than I can count I have cared very much for them, and my peculiar affection has never waned. It is as if I had known them, known them well in life and suffered because of their sufferings. They have enticed me as women in fiction seldom do, so intensely feminine are they.

In different worlds they lived ; one in the so-called great world, the other in that rustic world which Hardy depicts so wonderfully ; one in Russia, the other in England. But I feel them as sister women suffering intensely through love, expiating—victims of life. Again and again they have come to me together. So now I shall bracket them together as two well-beloved characters in fiction.

Are they really fictitious ? Are they invented ? Have they never lived—and died, under the train, and on the scaffold ? For me they have both lived and died. And I shall always care greatly for them both.

MR. ROLAND PERTWEE.

This is a fearful question, and, having a shred of modesty, I dare not choose one of the giant figures of literature as the goal of my creative ambition. The pen trembles on the brink of Hamlet, falters, loses courage, and drifts back to the inkwell.

But I cannot see why I should not choose that very gallant and puissant gentleman, Prince Florizel of Bohemia. He taught me what little I know of phrase and chivalry and, combined with an exquisite grace of manner and bearing, an unfailing appreciation of the ridiculous.

For many years Prince Florizel was God, and I can find no very good reason for changing my religion.

MR. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM.

Treating your inquiry from a purely practical point of view, I shall answer it by saying that of all characters in recent literature, as a matter of personal preference, I would choose to have been the creator of Sherlock Holmes.

In the first place, the character itself, as represented, is a perfect exposition of the writer's craft, and, secondly, its presentation created an interest in detective stories of a slightly different class, which has spread from one end of the world to the other.

I will try to ignore the fact that, with such a splendid lead, dozens of us less talented writers have taken the detective story to our hearts, thereby profiting greatly, and I will simply express my conviction that distraction, amusement, and interest have been afforded to millions of readers of the Sherlock Holmes stories themselves and the great volume of stories inspired by that character.

At a time when our fiction seems a little too much imbued with sex questions and problems, it is a great thing to have fostered an interest in wholesome stories of adventure, which have been so widely read.

MR. HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL.

What a difficult question! I have always been catholic in my tastes and predilections. I like everything in its right season. Perhaps of all characters in fiction I can name Robinson Crusoe as the one I should have been most proud to have created, simply because he has given so much pleasure to millions of readers, young and old. To please and delight the many is, in my humble opinion, a greater achievement than to tickle the palates of the highbrows.

MR. WILLIAM J. LOCKE.

I haven't the slightest doubt or hesitation in saying that I should like to have created d'Artagnan. First, because he has ever been a fellow after my own heart. Secondly, from his entrance on his scraggy horse, with little but his Gascon pride in his pocket, to his death as a Marshal of France, his development is a feat of characterization which any novelist would give his mental soul to accomplish.

MR. STACY AUMONIER.

When we begin to consider this rather fascinating problem of the characters in fiction one would like to have created, I suppose we are all instinctively influenced

"D'ARTAGNAN."

From the Statue by Gustave Doré.

By permission of Messrs. J. M. Dent and Co.

to a large extent not only by our own preferences and prejudices but by our own limitations. There are certain characters in fiction which impress us enormously, but which we know are entirely outside the scope of any creative powers we may possess. For instance, I cannot imagine myself creating Hamlet, or King Lear, or even Anna Karenina! It seems therefore rather futile to discuss them in this connection.

But, looking around amongst the more humanly possible creatures of an author's imagination, I do not know of any I would rather have created than Soames Forsyte. How I used to hate Soames when the Forsyte Saga began to unfold itself! He

was the antithesis of everything I love or admire in a man—this ice-cold, conventional, narrow-minded prig of an Englishman, with his passion for money, his utter lack of humour, and his insolent faith in his caste. I know that if I had met him I should instinctively have detested him. Moreover, I know that he would have—no, I cannot say detested me. He would not have flattered me to that extent. He would just have glanced down his thin nose and turned away. Apart from being "one of those writing fellows"—a crime sufficient to damn anyone—he would have regarded me as decadent and something to be avoided.

But as Soames began to pass through various phases of suffering, so did he become more sympathetic and interesting. His marriage with Irene, whom he adored, but never understood, marked the beginning of his emotional illusions. With her defection there came the general crumbling of all the idols of that Victorian world by which he set such store. Forsyteism itself appeared in jeopardy. His hurried second marriage, in his desire for a child, opened the second phase of the Soames drama. After that my antipathy to the man evanesced. I found him enormously interesting. I hated it when he went off the stage. I loved Soames. During the latter books of the Saga the passages which describe Soames's love for his daughter Fleur must surely be among the most beautiful of modern English prose. Foreigners who find the English character so baffling could not do better than make a study of Soames Forsyte. He embodies many characteristics that could only be English. He takes a lot of getting at. His reticences and aloofness conceal a mine of sentiment. He is a man who adores money but could not be bought. He is narrow, caste-ridden, obstinate, and vain. But beneath it all runs a seam of fineness, of courage, and of that elusive quality which one can only describe as greatness of soul. The whole thing appears to me to be a wonderful portrait, rich in colour, incisive, convincing, like a painting from Vandyke.

MR. ARTHUR MORRISON.

The first difficulty is that I have not read all literature, and if I had, I might still be more bewildered by the immensity of choice laid before my breathless judgment. Indeed, I am not disposed to envy any man his achievement, for if I had invented Jack Falstaff or Sarah Gamp, by so much would the glory of Shakespeare or Dickens be diminished.

But if I must make a choice, then it shall be one in which I hope not to be crowded by eager competitors; therefore I will say that I should like to have created the character of either Yajirobei or Kitahachi—perhaps the former for choice—in Jupensha Ikkyu's picaresque novel "Hizakurige." That must be very nearly the funniest book in the world, and Yajirobei and Kitahachi are very amusing rascals. As to my reasons—well, read the book and they will be obvious.

MR. COMPTON MACKENZIE.

I think that of all characters in literature I should like to have created Don Quixote, with Antigone as Sophocles gave her to us, Mr. Pickwick, and Falstaff as my next choices. I do not feel that I can give any satisfactory reasons for my choice without descending into an abyss of platitudes. For me Antigone has remained the noblest woman in literature since first I read Sophocles's play at the age of thirteen.

"MR. PICKWICK."
By Frank Reynolds, R.I.
By permission of Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton.

MR. EDGAR WALLACE.

There is no especial character that I would like to have created. One does not

create characters, except very modern and meaningless ones. All the characters worth while are recorded. Dickens, who was the greatest of all the character-makers, knew or had knowledge of the originals of all his famous puppets. If you ask me what book I would have written, I would say without hesitation Arthur Morrison's "Child of the Jago," which, in my judgment, is a classic

MR. JOHN BUCHAN.

I think that the two most astounding characters in literature are Shakespeare's Falstaff and Shakespeare's Cleopatra. They are not creations in the ordinary sense, for they seem to have taken charge of the author and to have a life altogether independent of him.

In the ordinary business of creation I think I would rather have created Sir Walter's Jeanie Deans than anybody else. She is literally true to fact, she sums up every good idiosyncrasy in the Scottish character, and she is most comprehensively and attractively alive.

MR. COSMO HAMILTON.

Becky Sharp, because she is a full-length portrait which will last as long as Romney's Lady Hamilton, and is painted with all the art and cunning of that master's brush.

Thackeray loathed this woman. He must have done so to have been able to bring her to life in all her detestable facets in so exquisite a way. And I don't believe that one can ever achieve a lasting character in a novel unless one hates or loves.

I love to draw detestable women. It's the only chance one ever has of getting one's own back. Then, too, they are so much more interesting to dissect, detect, and discover than the dear, sweet soul whose heart is as clean as a plate. In all the range of literature there isn't to be found a female devil to be compared with this one:—

"'I am innocent, Rawdon,' she cried, 'before God I am innocent.' She clung hold of his coat, of his hands; her own were all covered with serpents and rings and baubles . . ."

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SERIAL—THE MOST THRILLING STORY OF THE WHOLE SERIES

By H. C. McNEILE ("Sapper")

"SOLD FOREIGN"

By

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Illustrated by
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THE day was hot for the time of year. There was no breeze. The sun shone down from a clear blue sky on to the high wooded banks of the River Fal and the tramp steamers rusting at their moorings and the little white cottages and the grass-grown landing-stage where two elderly fishermen sat and smoked and mended their nets.

An old Ford taxi came slowly down the steep winding road under the trees and drew up some twenty or twenty-five yards away from the ferry.

A young man in a grey suit and soft grey hat alighted, paid the driver, and then, carrying his raincoat and a leather kit-bag, walked briskly toward the two fishermen.

He was an ordinary-looking young man, lean, bronzed, clean-shaven, and of middle height, with nothing in his appearance or upright bearing to distinguish him from any other young man of the same age or build. And yet neither of the two fishermen had any doubts at all. The moment they saw him they knew him for what he was.

"He's Royal Navy," said one.

"Aye. Orf'cer, too," said the other. "No mistakin' un!"

The young man halted and stood gazing toward the tramp steamers moored in mid-stream.

"Is that the *Ormesby?*" he asked.

"Yes, sur," said one of the fishermen. "Been layin' up 'ere nigh on three years."

"She's sold," said the other. "Sold foreign, sur, an' leavin' for Cardiff, Wales, this afternoon."

The young man in grey nodded.

"I know. I wonder if you could row me across."

"We could, sur," said the fisherman who had last spoken. He rose to his feet. "You want the captain?"

"I'm going as second mate."

The two fishermen grinned at each other.

"Wrong, ain't we?" said the one.

"Ah!" said the other. "Me an' my mate here thought you was Royal Navy—an orf'cer."

The young man in grey said nothing by way of comment. Nevertheless, as it so happened, the fishermen's first inference had been correct.

A BROAD-SHOULDERED old man in a captain's uniform leaned over the bulwark rail of the *Ormesby*.

"What d'you want?" he growled.

The young man in grey reached the top of the accommodation ladder.

"Are you Captain Dallory?" he said, pleasantly.

"I am. What about it?"

"My name's Wendell. I'm making the trip to Cardiff as second mate."

The look of blank amazement in the pale grey eyes gave way to anger.

"Second mate! *You!*"

"Yes, sir," said Wendell. He set his leather kit-bag down on the rusty deck, searched in an inside pocket of his jacket, and produced a letter. "This is for you, sir."

As the broad-shouldered old man read, his lips tightened. A dull red flush showed in his shrivelled cheeks.

Wendell stood between the rails and the saloon deck-house under the port wing of the lower bridge and gazed curiously about him.

Never before in all his life had he seen a ship in so terrible a state. Wherever he looked he beheld rust. He was filled with scorn for men who could exist a day even under such conditions.

He reflected presently that for three

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years or more the ship had been laid up, and that in that time not one penny, perhaps, had been spent on paint. His contempt ebbed. He was ashamed of himself for having judged without knowing the facts.

He turned his head and found, to his embarrassment, that the keen grey eyes with the tiny black pupils were staring at him sombrely, and he felt—stupidly enough, he knew—that it was useless to try and hide what was in his mind, for the man under whose command he had deliberately put himself could read his thoughts as easily as he had read the letter.

"So you're an officer in the Navy, are you, mister?"

"Yes, sir," said Wendell.

"What the deuce do you want on board a craft of this kind?"

"They said you wanted a second mate, so I offered my services."

"Wouldn't you get into trouble if they learnt what you'd been up to?"

"Why should I?" said Wendell. "No more than if I went for a voyage in a yacht." He laughed. "I'm not being paid, captain. I'm here for the fun of the thing, that's all, sir."

"For the fun of the thing!" said the captain in a thickish voice. "What d'you mean? And who told you I wanted a second mate?" He passed his hand across his forehead, and his uniform cap with the gold-braided peak tilted to the back of his grey head. "It's this way, Mr. Wendell—Wendell is the name, ain't it?—I've been waiting all morning to welcome an old shipmate of mine: he said he'd be here last night. In this letter it says he's had an accident and couldn't come and you're going in place of him."

"Yes, sir. Yesterday morning a motor-bus knocked him down and they had to take him to hospital. Nothing serious, they said, but his fall shook him. He sent word to the office to let you know. I was there when his message arrived, seeing a friend. When I heard I asked why shouldn't I make the trip from the Fal to Cardiff instead. Matter of fact, captain, I'm on leave. Been in hospital myself. Fever and bullet through my arm: Persian Gulf, Arab gun-runners. Fed up with doing nothing. Due to spend a week with some friends in South Wales, so I'm saving my railway fare by going by sea." He grinned and waited to hear what the captain would have to say to him. But as the captain remained silent he went on quickly: "There's nothing wrong with me now; I'm as fit as ever I was in my life."

A faint smile crossed the captain's face. He said, gruffly enough:—

"You mean, I take it, I needn't fear you won't be able to do the work, eh? Such a thought never entered my head. You may keep your watch, if you like; on the other hand, it wouldn't make much difference to me, mister, if you turned in and stayed in your bunk all the way from here to Cardiff. No offence, Mr. Wendell, but you see what I mean, don't you? Are you a friend or a relation of any of the directors, by any chance?"

"Not exactly, Captain Dallory. My father holds some stock in the company and a cousin of mine's the secretary. That's all. What made you ask?"

"No particular reason, Mr. Wendell. The fact is, I had command of the *Ormesby* for nigh on twenty years. And now the poor old ship's been sold foreign and I asked the owners if they'd let me take charge for the last time. Do you understand? They said I might. For old times' sake I thought I'd get hold of a couple of mates and two engineers who'd been shipmates of mine on board. That's why, mister, when I heard you were coming as second mate and that old Tom MacGuire was in hospital, I didn't like it. My plans had gone wrong."

A thin, grey-faced man wearing a white jacket and tight black trousers emerged from the saloon alleyway.

"This is the steward," said the captain. He raised his voice. "Steward, come here!"

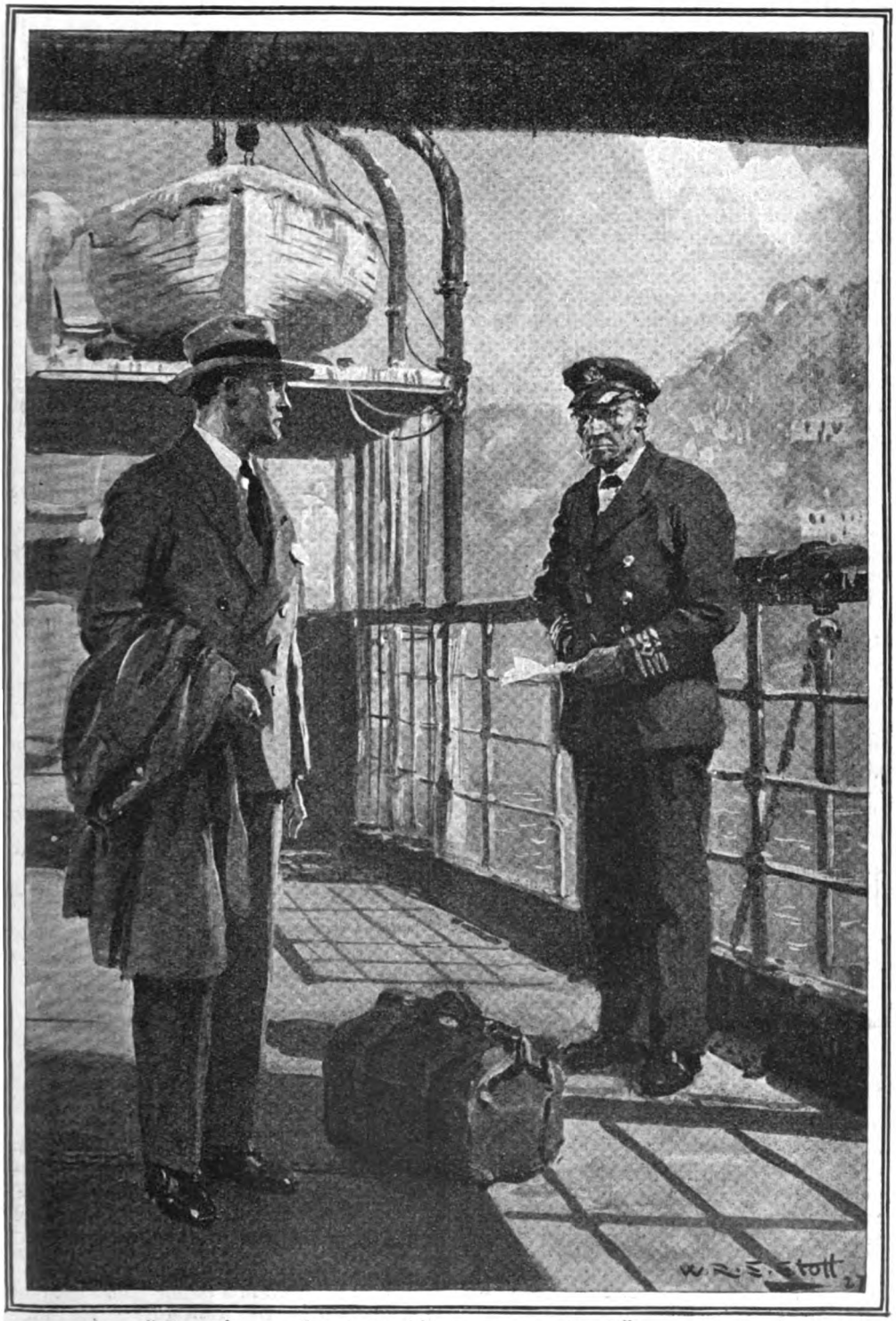
"Yes, sir," said the thin, grey-faced man.

"Steward, this is Mr. Wendell; he's going as second mate instead of Mr. MacGuire. Take his things and show him his cabin. And, Mr. Wendell, if there's anything you want to make things a bit more comfortable, let me know. And remember, even if an old tramp steamer like this isn't any great shakes after a cruiser or battleship, we're not quite uncivilized in the merchant service, whatever they say." He ended in a shout of laughter that sounded forced and artificial.

As Wendell followed the steward he took with him an uneasy impression that Captain Dallory was laughing not so much at his own wit as to hide a worry that he had not yet attempted to explain.

AT midday dinner in the little maple and teak-panelled saloon Wendell met the *Ormesby's* other officers: the mate and the two engineers. To his dismay he found that they resented his presence on board.

The mate was an enormously stout old man, with a round, red face and white hair and large blue eyes that gave him an appearance of perpetual astonishment. His name was Price. "Captain Price," said Captain Dallory. "Retired last year, but making the trip for the same reason as the rest of us."



"So you're an officer in the Navy, are you, mister?"
"Yes, sir," said Wendell.
"What the deuce do you want on board a craft of this kind?"

"Mate of the *Ormesby* for five years, Mr. Wendell." He wrinkled his forehead and frowned. "And you're Royal Navy, are ye, mister? Well, well! Met the Navy once or twice during the war, didn't we, Captain Dallory? Yes, mister, we met the Navy."

Wendell felt that in Mr. Price's opinion the Navy was of little consequence, and for the moment he was inclined to be angry. And then the mood passed and he smiled.

The old chief engineer, thin and bald and grey-bearded, MacPherson by name, shook hands with him limply and looked down at his soup-plate and smiled to himself Presently he raised his eyes.

"So you're makin' the trip to Cardiff, are you, Mr. Wendell? Aye, ye would! For the fun o' the thing, eh? It's a pity."

Wendell was startled.

"Why a pity?"

"The voyage is so short. It'd do ye guid to see what like o' life it is at sea."

The second engineer, Mr. Hennessy, chief engineer of the firm's newest and biggest ship and spending his few days between Western Ocean voyages on board the *Ormesby*, did not even offer to shake hands.

Never before had Wendell doubted his popularity, whatever the company he was in. Now, for the first time in his life, he found himself regarded with indifference, if not with actual dislike. His pride was hurt. He refused to be crushed, however, and made up his mind to ignore insults and exert whatever charm of manner he possessed to force these four sour-looking shipmates of his to be friendly. It would not be easy, he knew.

FOR a long time nobody spoke. The tension grew more and more noticeable. It seemed to Wendell that each of the men seated with him at the table had secret fears of what he might say or do.

The captain sighed.

"Queer, being back again, isn't it?" he said.

The fat mate looked up from his plate of roast beef and fried potatoes and cabbage and beans.

"When I seen the ol' *Ormesby* last night it was like—like turning back a page in a book." He stopped. The red in his chubby face deepened. He laughed awkwardly, as though ashamed of himself. "Romantic, ain't I? But, Lord, what a mess! Beats me why anyone should think it worth while buying the old ship at all. Nothing but junk! Scrap iron!"

"It's no' the engines are junk, onyway," said the old chief engineer. "Barrin' the dynamo, which needs new bindin' wires an' canna be used, there's nothing amiss in the engine-room. It would be worth ony yin's while takin' the engines oot of her an' puttin' them into anither ship. Twenty-five years old an' as guid as the day the old *Ormesby* ran her trials."

"They've had some knocking about, too," said the second engineer. "Do you remember that time in the Red Sea, Mr. MacPherson, when the L.P. piston-rod carried away at the neck of the taper in the crosshead?"

"Aye," said the chief. "A vera guid job we made of it, too. Piston an' rod an' broken cover lashed doon, the L.P. valve drawn an' stowed, the steam ports plugged in the valve face, casing cover rejointed, and we reached Aden compound."

"Bad enough," said the mate, "was when the *Ormesby* went ashore in the St. Lawrence in the fog and the ice threatening to shut down on us."

"Aye, bad enough," said the captain. "I made certain I'd lost my ticket, if not my ship."

"Pilot on board?" asked Wendell, briefly.

"Pilot!" said the mate, scornfully. "Mister, you've a lot to learn. You take a pilot because you've got to. If the pilot makes a mistake, it's the skipper who's fired. That's justice and common sense."

"Seems queer."

"You'll find lots of queer things going to sea in tramp steamers. The Navy's different. The Navy's a sheltered trade."

There was a sudden silence. Wendell half rose to his feet and then dropped into his chair again.

"You're darned polite, I must say. What do you know about the Navy, any of you?"

The captain, who was stirring his coffee, looked at him thoughtfully.

"We're old enough to know all that there is to know."

"Mr. Wendell," said the chief engineer, "you're an observant young man. Tell us, how old do you think we are?"

"I couldn't say," said Wendell.

"I'm sixty-nine," said the captain.

"I'm seventy," said the chief engineer.

"I'm sixty-six," said the mate.

"I'm fifty-eight," said the second engineer, "and as tough as they make 'em."

"I'm twenty-four," said Wendell.

"An' me," said the steward, giving him a cup of coffee, "I'm sixty-seven. I left my pub in South Shields to make this here trip to Cardiff. The missus says it's a sign I'm in my second childhood at last. Beggin' yer pardon." He grinned and retired into the pantry.

"He's landlord of a public-house in South Shields," said the captain. "He owns house property and he's got money in the bank. If I'd gone to sea as a steward and

used my wits, same as him, my old age would be prosperous too. But he calls me 'sir,' if that's any help."

"South Shields is a long way from Cornwall," said Wendell. "I wonder it was worth his while coming."

"Mister," said the second engineer, "Captain Dallory here came from Liverpool; Captain Price—Mr. Price—from Newcastle; Mr. MacPherson from Aberdeen; myself from Glasgow by way of Dublin. Does that surprise you?"

"Ye ken, Mr. Wendell," said the chief engineer, "the *Ormesby* is no' an ordinary tramp."

"The *Ormesby's* made history," said the mate.

"Mr. Wendell," said the captain, "did they never tell you the story of how the *Ormesby* sank the U boat that got the cruisers?"

"No," said Wendell. "I never heard about that."

"You wouldn't," said the second engineer. "The Navy doesn't go out of its way to give credit to the merchant service, does it? It hogs what little there was itself." He smiled unpleasantly. "I wasn't on board myself, worse luck."

"Mr. Wendell," said the chief engineer, "ye maun come doon into the engine-room some time and I'll show you where the shell tore through the bulkhead and burst without stoppin' the engines. Killed the third engineer, though, and the donkeyman, and wounded me and the second."

"They shelled you, eh?" said Wendell.

"Tell him, captain," said Mr. Price.

"THERE'S nothing to tell," said the captain. "They shelled us, yes. They weren't going to waste good torpedoes on an old tramp, not in that light. So they shelled us. Something went wrong with the steering gear: the helm jammed: the man at the wheel was killed and the second mate was killed, and we went travelling around in a circle, full speed, with no one to look after the engines and the shells bursting all over us. I thought we were finished. And then the steering gear got to working again, and the ship answered her helm and we made straight for the submarine and by some everlasting miracle went slap through her shelling and cut her in two. That's all, mister."

The chief engineer clucked his tongue.

"Aye, that's all. God forgive ye, Johnny! Mr. Wendell, Captain Dallory's left oot the best pairt o' the story: hoo we stoppit the engines when they fired a shot at us an' signalled they wantit to talk, an' hoo they closed in on us, an' hoo the captain here rang doon the engine-room *Full ahead*, an' hoo—— Aweel, what's the guid? I ocht to hae had mair sense an' told the story myself. Mr. Wendell, ye wudna think to look at him noo that after he was woundit in four places Captain Dallory took the wheel himself, wud ye? Weel, it's the truth. He sank the U boat that got the two cruisers in the yin afternoon, an' the Germans swore that they'd get the *Ormesby* an' us too."

"They did," said the mate. "The *Ormesby* was sunk in the Channel in 'eighteen."

"Sunk!" said Wendell.

"Aye," said the chief. "Sunk! But we got into shallow water first. They wanted ships badly in those days, if ye remember, so the divers clapped a patch on to our side an' the water was pumped oot, an' early the next spring we were yince mair earnin' enormous dividends for the owners."

"The war was over by then," said the second engineer.

"Aye, the war was over," said the captain. His face was set in grim lines; his pale grey eyes with the tiny black pupils seemed to be gazing across the little saloon into space. He rested one elbow on the table and propped his chin on his clenched fist. "Aye," he said, "the war's over and the Germans have got the *Ormesby*."

"How do you mean, the Germans have got the *Ormesby?*" said Wendell.

"What's the sense in askin' a stupid question like that?" said the second engineer. "You know as well as we do the ship's been sold to the Germans. Why pretend?"

Wendell was furious.

"You'll take that back," he said. "What are you insinuating now? I never knew the ship had been sold to the Germans. How should I?"

"Didn't they tell you in London?" said the fat mate. "Think, mister, before you answer. Here's something we'd like to know, all of us: what the devil brings you aboard?"

"I'm here for the run round to Cardiff," said Wendell. "I told you. Is anything the matter?" He glanced at each of the four hard faces in turn and saw in each a distrust and a doubt that chilled him. "You'd think there was some reason why you fellows didn't want me on board."

The steward appeared in the doorway.

"Couple o' tugs comin' up the river, sir."

"That'll be for us," said the captain. He rose to his feet. "Well, we've got to get busy."

"Mr. Wendell," said the chief engineer, "come doon to the engine-room some time this afternoon an' I'll show ye the marks of

that shell-burst an' ye'll see for yourself what like a marvel it was the engines kept movin'."

The captain nodded.

"That's right, chief. Mr. Wendell, go where you like, see what you can; and when you're an admiral you'll be able to look back on the trip and tell them what going to sea in tramp steamers means."

IT was evening and the *Ormesby* was lifting to the swell of the Atlantic.

Wendell, dressed now in an old and shabby blue suit, paced to and fro from one wing of the upper bridge to the other, deep in thought.

Why he was not wanted on board remained a mystery he could not solve. Was it because he was Navy that these tramp-steamer men disliked him, or what? What possible reason could they have for objecting to him, save prejudice?

He had seen neither the chief engineer nor the second since dinner. He had had his tea by himself in the saloon after the captain and mate and the chief had had theirs. The second engineer, so the steward had said, should have been with him, but had sent up word to say he was too busy to leave the engine-room. Wendell had known he was avoiding him purposely.

He heard a footstep and, turning, saw the captain.

"Wind's getting up."

"Yes, sir," said Wendell.

The captain stood by his side.

"She's been a fine old ship in her day, mister; as fine in her own particular way as any swagger liner. Finer, perhaps." He paused and went on again in a lower voice: "I served my time in sail, Mr. Wendell, before the mast. I got my ticket square rig, and then changed over to steam. Seems queer, don't it, a man brought up in sail feeling the way I feel about an old tramp steamer? But there it is. A fact. You see, mister, she did her bit in the war. That counts, don't it? Wouldn't you have thought, now, the owners would have kept her, or had her broken up in one of the yards at home, or not sold to the Germans, anyway? The man who bought her is a Hamburg shipowner. He saw the old ship laying up in the Fal, he knew her story, and that's why he wanted to get his hands on her. See? To degrade her, like. Hard, ain't it?"

"Yes, captain, it's hard," said Wendell.

"You'll find lots of queer things going to sea in tramp steamers.
"You're darned polite, I must say. What do you know

He could see the queer old man's point of view and he sympathized.

The helmsman struck eight bells. The fat mate hauled himself up the bridge ladder, grunting.

" Breeze has freshened since six o'clock, ain't it ? No matter, anyway."

The helmsman was relieved. He gave the course to Wendell.

" Nor'-west by west, a quarter west."

" Nor'-west by west, a quarter west," repeated Wendell.

" Going to turn in and get some sleep, Mr. Wendell ? " said the captain. " I should if I was you. You're not long out of hospital, are you ? "

" Up at midnight for another four hours, Mr. Wendell," said the mate. " You'll need some sleep."

" I suppose I shall," said Wendell. " I'm tired." He gave the course and climbed down the bridge ladders and went to his own cabin, off the starboard side saloon alleyway.

For half an hour or so he lay on the settee in his shirt-sleeves, under a blanket, smoking and trying to read a magazine by the light of an oil lamp above his head. Tired or not, he had no particular wish to undress and climb into his bunk. In spite of the wide-open port, his room smelled close and damp and unaired. He grew more and more wakeful.

Soon after two bells there came a tap on the door.

He raised himself on one elbow.

" Come in," he said.

Captain Dallory stood in the alleyway.

" Not in bed yet, Mr. Wendell ? "

" Not yet, sir—betwixt and between." He hesitated, surprised and a little annoyed. " Was there anything you wanted me for ? "

" No, Mr. Wendell. No. Just thought I'd see how you were getting on."

He withdrew quietly.

Wendell did not move. Why should the captain have taken the trouble to come and inquire whether he had turned in or not ? What dam' business was it of his ?

And suddenly all the vague suspicions that had lain dormant in his mind rose to the surface again. What the devil was wrong with everybody ? All desire for sleep left him.

He flung off his blanket and stood up, put on his jacket and sweater, wound a white scarf about his neck, and crept cautiously into the alleyway. Then, after

The Navy's different. The Navy's a sheltered trade."
about the Navy, any of you ? " asked Wendell.

locking the door of his room and slipping the key into his pocket, he made his way on to the bridge deck.

The night was dark. The moon had not yet risen. Low down in the west a faint band of yellow marked where the sun had set.

He walked slowly past the No. 3 hatch toward the engine-room and halted by the open doorway of the fiddley.

The captain came out of his room on the lower bridge and stood at the head of the ladder that led down to the bridge deck. Wendell watched him. He turned at the sound of footsteps and saw the lean steward shuffling toward him from the direction of the galley. Without in the least knowing the reason, he felt it would be as well if the steward did not see him, and so slid through the fiddley door and waited, between the ash-hoist engine and the ventilator, until he had passed.

When he looked out through the doorway he saw that the captain was talking to the steward on the bridge deck. It was ridiculous, Wendell knew, but he felt they were talking about him and was glad he had locked the door of his cabin.

And then he remembered the chief's invitation to visit the engine-room, and climbed down the long steel ladders that led past the 'tween-deck bunkers to the stokehold, where two grimy firemen stared at him in surprise.

"Evening," he said. "Care for a smoke?"

They accepted his cigarettes and thanked him.

"Which of the engineers is on watch?" he asked.

"The chief," they said.

"I'll go and have a chat with him," he said. Stooping, he moved along the narrow, dark alleyway between the starboard and centre boilers, pulled open the steel door, and found himself in the engine-room.

The light of the few dim-burning paraffin oil lamps made it difficult to see, but the chief engineer was not visible either on the front platform or on the middle grating. For a while Wendell stood and watched the cranks whirling round and round in their pits and listened to the thrum and rumble of the engines and the clacking of the pumps. Presently he passed between the H.P. engine and the boilers to the back platform, where the lighting was worse than in any other part of the engine-room.

But here again there was no chief engineer.

And then Wendell realized that he must have gone up the shaft tunnel to oil the stern gland or the shaft bearings, or whatever it was engineers did oil in the tunnel, and he was no longer puzzled by his absence. He was lighting his pipe, standing by a dome-shaped evaporator near the after bulkhead, when he heard the sound of quick footsteps overhead and, looking up, saw the burly figure of the second engineer hurrying down the ladder that led from the cylinder tops to the front platform.

Wendell did not care whether Hennessy saw him or not. On the other hand, he had no real desire to speak to him and did nothing to attract his attention.

When Hennessy reached the front platform he stood gazing anxiously in the direction of the boilers and stokehold. It seemed that he was listening. His attitude, the way he held his head, the poise of his body, indicated a sense of danger. After a time, as though reassured, he turned and walked quietly toward the thrust recess.

The chief's voice spoke from the door of the tunnel.

"Everything a' richt, Mr. Hennessy?"

"Everything's all right, chief. All clear."

Wendell crossed the shaft between the thrust bearings and the main engines.

Hennessy had his back toward him and was talking to the chief, who stood just inside the tunnel door.

Wendell descended the two steps from the front platform and approached. Apparently the beat of the engines muffled the sound of his footsteps.

He heard Hennessy say:—

"Got the fuse fixed, chief?"

"Aye. The charge is tamped doon. It's time. Are ye ready?"

A wild and incredulous amazement swept over Wendell. He said, harshly:—

"What the hell do you want a fuse for?"

Hennessy whirled about. Wendell saw fear in his sallow face and dark anger and hate. Something hard struck him on the forehead. He was conscious of a stabbing pain in his spine and darkness enveloped him as he fell.

"HOW did it happen?" said a voice.

"I don't understand even now."

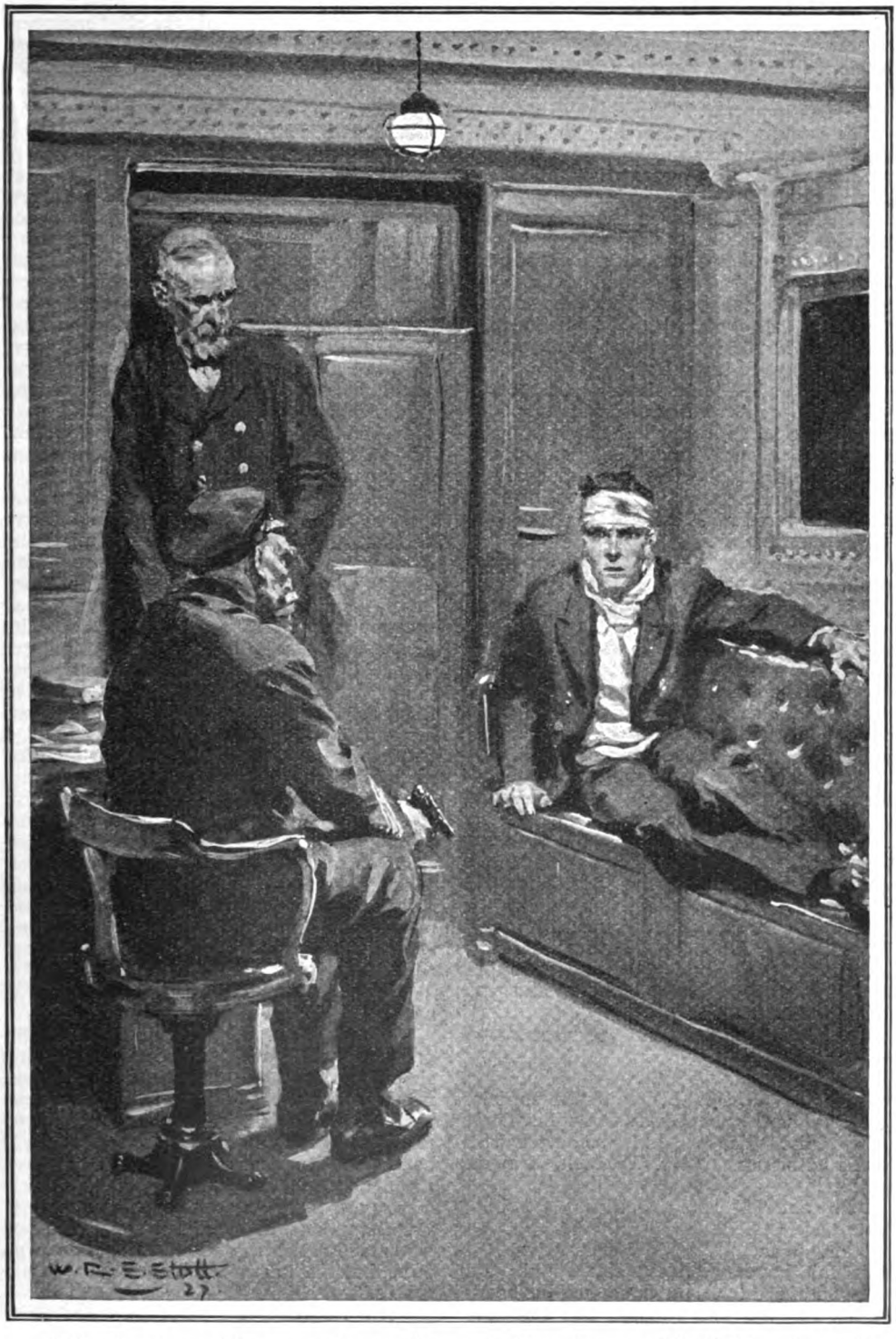
"Hoo did we ken he'd come into the engine-room frae the stokehold just when Hennessy had gone up to the top gratings to see was everything clear? When Hennessy came doon he was on the back platform."

"Hiding?"

"I dinna ken, Johnny. He was there, onyway. Hennessy an' I were talkin' when he spoke to me an' asked what did we want the fuse for. Hennessy knockit him doon with a wheel spanner."

Someone—the captain—uttered a little groan.

Wendell opened his eyes.



"Go ahead, you old mummy, shoot! I'm not afraid, and you needn't think it. Shoot!"
The captain and the chief engineer stared at him.

He lay on the settee in the captain's room on the lower bridge. He felt limp and helpless. His head was throbbing from the pain of his wound.

" What happened ? " he asked.

The captain sat in his chair at his flat-topped desk, watching him. Wendell was bewildered by the fanaticism in the fierce grey eyes.

" Mr. Wendell," he said, " if you give any trouble——"

Wendell struggled into a sitting position.

" Captain," he said, and he pointed toward the chief engineer, leaning against the bulkhead. " Captain, Mr. MacPherson there and Mr. Hennessy are planning to do some damage to the ship."

" Mr. Wendell," said the captain, " listen to me. I don't want to threaten you or have to be harsh, but we're desperate men. Do you understand me ? "

For the first time since he had come to himself Wendell saw the automatic pistol in the captain's right hand.

He was shocked.

" Do you mean, Captain Dallory, seriously, you'd use that thing ? "

" I do, Mr. Wendell. Don't try my patience too far. Whatever happens from now on is no business of yours. Get me ? You'll see what you're told to see, you'll say what you're asked to ; you'll be deaf, dumb, blind, at my orders. You'll not only obey instructions while you're on board, you'll obey them as long as you live."

" You mean I'm to do just what you tell me to do, whatever it is ? "

" I mean just that, mister."

" What's the scheme, captain ? Insurance ? Go ahead, tell me, and then shoot, if you want to shoot. Or shoot without telling, if you prefer. I'm not interested, one way or the other. But I tell you this much, if you don't shoot, I'll make England too hot for the lot of you. Go ahead, you old mummy, shoot ! I'm not afraid, and you needn't think it. Shoot ! "

The captain and the chief engineer stared at him.

" MR. WENDELL," said the captain. His thin hand clawed at his lower lip. His forehead was dotted with beads of sweat. " Mr. Wendell, I'm in earnest."

" So am I," said Wendell. " Shoot ! You daren't ! "

" Mr. Wendell," said the captain, " I shouldn't have taken the line I did. I'll tell you this much : your coming on board in the Fal was bad enough, but this here being in the engine-room at the wrong time has ruined the lot of us. It will ruin us, that is, if you talk."

" Why should it ? " said the chief engineer.

The captain turned his head and gazed at him. He shoved his cap on to the back of his scalp. His eyes shone.

" Mac," he said, " you're right. Why should it ? Mr. Wendell, listen. You wouldn't be bluffed into keeping quiet by the threat of a bullet. Right ! I respect ye. But the rest of us, the chief engineer, the mate, me, and Mr. Hennessy, we're not going to be bluffed into not doing our duty by the fear of you talking. Talk if you like, Mr. Wendell, and be damned to you for a low-down, sneaking, brass-bound pup ! Get me ? And if you can hold your head up again, after giving us poor devils away, why, by God I'd rather be me in prison than you parading around the quarter-deck of some dam' battleship."

" I've got a headache," said Wendell. " I can't argue. You've said too much or not enough. What is it ? "

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" Aye, Hennessy's. And now, Mr. Navy man, when you get ashore, safe and sound, which you will, please God, you go straight

to the owners, then to the Admiralty—they'll most probably give you a medal—and then to the Board of Trade. Tell them what happened. You may. I don't give a damn. By that time the *Ormesby*'ll be where the Germans can't get her, or the owners, or the dam' shareholders either. And as I say, if you ever hold your head up again, I'd rather be me, in clink, than you."

"Captain," said Wendell, "I'd like to shake hands."

"Thank you, Mr. Wendell. You've taken a load off my mind."

"Time's up," said the chief. "Listen!"

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"The deck's tilting already," said the chief.

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The crowded lifeboat pitched heavily.

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"Come up just under us, as we passed."

"D'you know, fellers, seems to me we struck one of them old floatin' mines. Sounded that way, any'ow."

Wendell heard Hennessy utter a soft, pleased little laugh.

"A mine! Holy Moses! That was it, chief! A mine!"

The water had reached the funnel. The moon's reflection on the short white-crested seas dazzled the eyes. The roar of the steam escaping from the exhausts deadened the sound of the voices of the men talking.

Wendell heard Price, the fat, red-faced mate, shout:—

"There'll be no raising her this time, captain."

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"Act of God," said Wendell, shortly.

He felt sick and tired and the ache in his head was worse.

Hennessy leaned forward and patted his knee.

"That crack on the forehead ye got when ye—when ye fell, lad: does it hurt?"

"No," said Wendell. "It's nothing. Mr. Hennessy, I'd have suffered worse gladly to be where I am now, to see what I've seen, to know what I know."

"Thank ye," said Hennessy. "I understand."

"Give way," said the captain. "Give way, m' sons. We've got a long, hard pull before us."

"Not so long," said Wendell. His keen eyes had seen in the distance the red and green sidelights and the mast headlights of a steamer. "They've sighted our rockets."

He lay on the settee in the captain's room on the lower bridge. He felt limp and helpless. His head was throbbing from the pain of his wound.

"What happened?" he asked.

The captain sat in his chair at his flat-topped desk, watching him. Wendell was bewildered by the fanaticism in the fierce grey eyes.

"Mr. Wendell," he said, "if you give any trouble——"

Wendell struggled into a sitting position.

"Captain," he said, and he pointed toward the chief engineer, leaning against the bulkhead. "Captain, Mr. MacPherson there and Mr. Hennessy are planning to do some damage to the ship."

"Mr. Wendell," said the captain, "listen to me. I don't want to threaten you or have to be harsh, but we're desperate men. Do you understand me?"

For the first time since he had come to himself Wendell saw the automatic pistol in the captain's right hand.

He was shocked.

"Do you mean, Captain Dallory, seriously, you'd use that thing?"

"I do, Mr. Wendell. Don't try my patience too far. Whatever happens from now on is no business of yours. Get me? You'll see what you're told to see, you'll say what you're asked to; you'll be deaf, dumb, blind, at my orders. You'll not only obey instructions while you're on board, you'll obey them as long as you live."

"You mean I'm to do just what you tell me to do, whatever it is?"

"I mean just that, mister."

"What's the scheme, captain? Insurance? Go ahead, tell me, and then shoot, if you want to shoot. Or shoot without telling, if you prefer. I'm not interested, one way or the other. But I tell you this much, if you don't shoot, I'll make England too hot for the lot of you. Go ahead, you old mummy, shoot! I'm not afraid, and you needn't think it. Shoot!"

The captain and the chief engineer stared at him.

"MR. WENDELL," said the captain. His thin hand clawed at his lower lip. His forehead was dotted with beads of sweat. "Mr. Wendell, I'm in earnest."

"So am I," said Wendell. "Shoot! You daren't!"

"Mr. Wendell," said the captain, "I shouldn't have taken the line I did. I'll tell you this much: your coming on board in the Fal was bad enough, but this here being in the engine-room at the wrong time has ruined the lot of us. It will ruin us, that is, if you talk."

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THESE THRILLING ARTICLES ARE FACT—NOT FICTION.

Cases from My Crime-Book

By

H. ASHTON-WOLFE

(Interpreter at the Criminal Courts)

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The stories which I have selected for this series can be found in the official records, only one or two details having been rearranged in order to avoid giving pain and reopening old wounds.

No. IX. THE MAN WITH THE SIX TOES.

THE Rue de Charenton first became notorious because the bandit Cartouche made it his hunting-ground. The curious traveller may still visit an old building bearing the number 302, where this French Dick Turpin caroused with his fellows—even the old well with its double underground exit is still there. In that same street is the "Passage de la Grande Pinte," which for a long time was the meeting-place and headquarters of the loathsome Pedro La Marra and his evil band.

Through the dirty window of the "Lapin Blanc" I could see my colleague, Inspector Louys, sitting tilted comfortably back in a wicker chair close to an iron stove in which a great fire was crackling. I envied him, for I was cold and tired. Dressed in ragged, filthy clothes, I had slouched up and down the Rue Charenton for several dreary days, acting the part of an *apache* of the solitary type; one who has only recently passed through the massive gates of a prison and is seeking to chum up again with a gang.

The murderer, "Six Toes."

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THE VANISHED ACTRESS.

IT was a puzzling crime which had brought me there.

A week before, the

well-known actress Elena had mysteriously disappeared from her flat in the Rue Vallais.

The maid had taken a morning cup of coffee upstairs at the usual hour. As she received no reply to her insistent knocking, and becoming alarmed at the prolonged silence, she then summoned the police. The bedroom was on the fifth floor. The door was locked and bolted on the inside and had to be forced. The detectives found the bed half dragged to the floor, but no sign of the actress. A massive safe, in which she kept her valuable jewels, had been cleverly broken open and was empty. On the carpet lay a short piece of steel. This was blood-stained and gave us several finger-marks ; while wedged in the corner of a drawer we discovered a scrap of twisted paper, which proved to be a torn bank-note. The laboratory report stated that the note was counterfeit and the finger-marks were identified. They belonged to a man whom we believed to be a member of the gang who were printing and passing quantities of counterfeit ten-pound and one-thousand-franc notes. Inconceivable as it appeared, someone had either scaled the smooth perpendicular walls of the house or had descended from the sloping roof, entering through the window.

Mr. Ashton-Wolfe, disguised as an *apache*, on duty outside the "Lapin Blanc."

What had become of Mlle. Elena no one could say. The only mark we discovered was a strange pattern composed of six oval impressions, very like that which clutching finger-tips would leave. These were found on the edge of the balcony.

A thumb-mark on the torn bank-note was also identified, but there again the police were baffled—for the chart which the records sent to M. Dufresne bore the name "*Felipe, José, Spaniard—sentenced to transportation for life. Crime, forgery*"; and across the chart was the official stamp: "*Died in Cayenne.*"

All our energies were therefore concentrated on running to earth the gang who were passing the counterfeit notes. Somewhere in the circle we had drawn around the Rue Charenton the bogus bank-notes were being printed. Information received from London led M. Dufresne to believe that we were dealing with an international group, and that the leaders were either English or Americans; hence my co-operation.

WE LOSE OUR MAN.

THE day before we had seen a man whom we suspected come out of the room which Inspector Louys was now watching, carrying a large satchel. We had followed him to the underground station, but he had cleverly evaded us. Suddenly at the Louvre Station the fellow pulled the door open and jumped out. Neither Louys nor I had dared to move, for we guessed that confederates were watching the passengers.

That was a week ago. Now to-day, in different dress, we were again at the "Lapin Blanc."

Suddenly a taxi passed—hooting the prearranged signal. It was the old Brigadier Rousseau. Glancing round, I saw not far away three workmen, carrying tool-bags, coming towards the tavern. I slouched into the taproom and ordered a cup of coffee with rum. Instantly my drowsy colleague awoke—and left. The three men entered and ordered drinks. One of them was the man we had already followed.

Another round of drinks went the way of the first; then, handing their apparently innocent bags to the landlord, with the request that he would keep them until the evening, they filed out. After a reasonable period I also stepped into the street, where I perceived my colleague staring disconsolately about him. When I approached he pushed open the massive entrance to a house. One glance was enough. Although the door was no different from any other, it led, not into a dwelling, but into a long, narrow alley flanked by small houses and dingy taverns, with numerous runways criss-cross-

ing it. Over the portal, barely legible, were the words, " Passage de la Grande Pinte." It was the former haunt of the famous bandit, Cartouche, who had often escaped from pursuit through this same passage. Intensely humiliated, we returned to the Sûreté.

" Well, well," said M. Dufresne, when I had explained how we had been caught; " I'm not blaming you, but have you never heard of the ' Passage ' ? "

Louys shook his head despondently. " Even if I had," he muttered, " I couldn't be at both ends, and they'd have seen me if I had gone after them through the door."

" All right. Go to bed, both of you, and snatch a few hours' sleep. The matter is becoming serious. No trace of the actress Elena has been found, and I am convinced that only by rounding up this gang shall we clear up the mystery. Don't go home—lie down in the service room. I may need you at any moment."

ON THE TRAIL AGAIN.

IT seemed as though I had not slept five minutes before I felt someone shaking me violently, and found Rousseau bending over the camp bed.

" Well, my friend, so you lost the trail, eh ? It's lucky the old Brigadier knows Paris. When I saw them go into the ' Grande Pinte ' I rushed round to the other end on two wheels. We've all been fooled. I believe the ' Lapin Blanc ' is only a blind. I've discovered their real meeting-place at last. Right at the other end of Paris on top of Montmartre. Hotel Dulac, in the Rue Lepic—that's where they went. They came out an hour ago dressed in evening clothes. Louys is after them and has just 'phoned that they are dining at ' La Chandelle.' M. Dufresne wants you to slip into a dinner jacket and go there. I ll be outside with my taxi to drive you. Some time during the night we'll raid their place."

It did not take me long to bathe, shave, and dress. " La Chandelle," a notorious place of amusement in Montmartre, was crowded with the usual medley of foreigners. Our three workmen of the " Lapin Blanc " were so changed that I hardly recognized them. Dressed expensively and in the latest fashion, they were spending money freely, and a crowd of laughing girls surrounded their table. Several hours passed in tedious waiting, for it was not easy to pretend to enter into the mad frivolity of the night. Abruptly I felt a scrap of paper pushed into my hand, and saw a young girl dressed as a Columbine dancing past our table. It was a note from the manager requesting me to come to his office. He rose as I entered, and pointed to five one-thousand-franc notes spread out on his desk.

" I have been informed of your investigation," he said, courteously, " and the Sûreté advised me to examine all notes of large denomination. Can you tell me if these are genuine ? "

Feigning indifference, I examined the money. The notes were all forged.

" I am afraid that you will have to send them to the laboratory," I said. " I cannot tell if they are counterfeit. Who gave them to you ? "

" The swarthy man and his two friends. They are the men whom you are watching, I imagine."

I smiled and shook my head.

" We are not watching anyone, monsieur; but send this money to the police headquarters to-morrow, and leave the rest to us."

When I returned I found that our three men had risen and were ready to go. Leaving Louys to follow the car they had called, I telephoned my discovery to headquarters, and received orders to go at once to the police station of the Rue Tourlac, where my colleagues were gathering for the raid which was to take place.

AN UNSUCCESSFUL RAID.

THE *commissaire* had not arrived, but in a corner M. Dufresne and Rousseau were chatting, whilst from the " fiddles," as the cells are picturesquely named, a discordant singing and shouting came in noisy gusts.

" The fiddles are full to-night," growled Rousseau, " but nothing to interest us. We start as soon as Louys telephones."

Then the telephone shrilled.

" The rats are in the trap," said M. Dufresne. " Come in twos and threes, please."

Silently we filed out, taking different directions. Dufresne, Rousseau, and I kept together, chatting loudly, as though returning befuddled from some midnight revel. Suddenly I saw the Brigadier dart forward, as a dark figure flitted into a doorway. There was an angry squeal, instantly hushed, and we found our friend holding an Algerian carpet-seller firmly by his wrists.

" A spy," Rousseau exclaimed. " We're recognized."

" No, no," the fellow wailed. " Me Sidi Filoche—sell carpets, no spy."

Dufresne called two policemen, and the Algerian was led away.

" Lucky we are still some distance from the house, or he would have given the alarm," said Rousseau. " I know him; he's been in trouble before. Here we are; this is the place."

I saw that it was one of those doubtful

hotels where, in defiance of the regulations, no questions are asked nor any register signed. In reply to our repeated ringing and knocking, the door at last opened a few inches. Instantly several police threw their weight on it and jammed the landlord—a fat, evil-looking fellow—against the wall.

A hand was clapped over his mouth, and with a rush the police were up the stairs. In a moment every exit was barred. The noise brought the startled inmates to their doors, and a thorough search commenced; but nowhere did we see any sign of a printing press nor of the men we sought.

"We'll withdraw as though satisfied," M. Dufresne whispered, "and then hide and watch."

SIX DEAD MEN.

I FOUND a sheltered post in a doorway. An hour passed and I was beginning to think that I could risk a smoke, when abruptly a deep snarling, booming sound ripped through the silence of sleeping Paris. It was "La Savoyarde," the famous bell of the Sacré Cœur, which squats like a gigantic idol at the summit of Montmartre. Six o'clock, and dawn was not far off. Close on the last throbbing stroke came a wild, dreadful scream of deadly agony, followed by a squealing animal laugh and the sharp spang of two pistol shots. From the hotel we had raided came a hoarse murmur of frightened voices. The minutes seemed hours before we forced an entry. Like a swarm of angry wasps the police spread out along passages and stairs. As I gained the third landing I saw the Brigadier halt before the door of a room and point downwards. A thick viscous stream was slowly creeping along the cracks and depressions of the grimy floor.

M. Dufresne hurried up at our call. For a moment we paused, for we knew that some horrible sight awaited us; then Rousseau turned the handle.

A bloodstained body was lying huddled against the wall—but it was not that which caused us to start back in amazement and horror. Sitting stiffly erect around a deal table, with grotesque distorted bodies and grimacing faces, were six men. One look at their staring eyes was enough. They were dead — blasted, shrivelled by some hideous force!

Mlle. Elena,

The actress who was murdered by the "man with the six toes."

We had entered this room on our first visit, and it had then been empty. The awful, inconceivable tragedy had been enacted during that hour which we had spent hidden and waiting in the shadows. Rousseau was about to approach the nightmare group when a groan caused us to wheel in alarm. We had quite forgotten the man on the floor. He was an Arab, and appeared to be one of the many itinerant venders who expose their wares in the Paris *cafés*.

"Good heavens!" cried Rousseau, kneeling beside him. "It's the same fellow we caught spying. He must have got away. A doctor, quickly!"

At the sound of Rousseau's voice the Arab opened his eyes and his lips moved.

"Carry the poor fellow downstairs," snapped Dufresne, "and rush him to the nearest chemist. Come along, give a hand. And you, Colbert, guard this room."

I remained with Colbert in the passage whilst the remainder

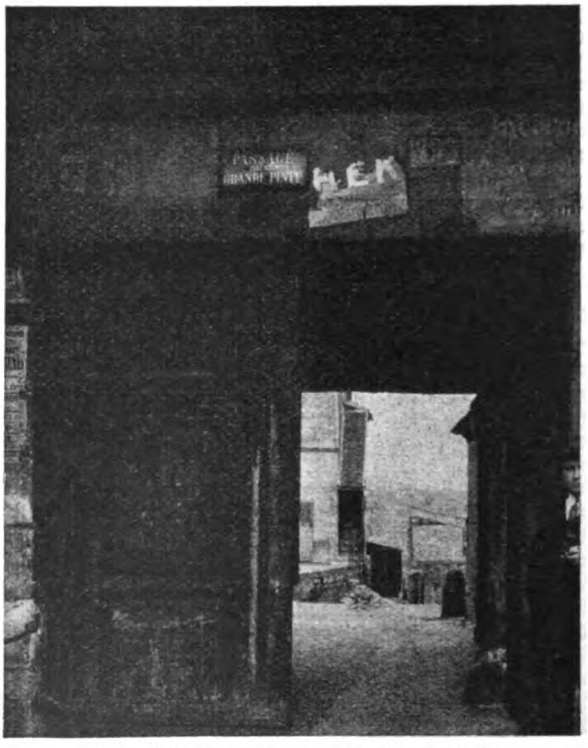
of our men conducted the hastily-dressed inmates of the hotel to the cells.

"I've seen some strange sights, and so have you——," Colbert was beginning, when Rousseau came dashing up the stairs.

"Quick! Let me in!" he gasped, and snatched at the key which Colbert held. Again the door opened wide, but if we had been startled before, it was stark terror which ran like icy water along our nerves. *Three of the dead, distorted figures had disappeared!*

We seized and shook those which remained. They were dead—there was no doubt of that—yet three who had looked as lifeless as they had vanished! Ten minutes had passed since the Arab was carried away; we had locked and guarded the door, the window was thirty feet from the ground, nevertheless this incredible thing had happened! Rousseau was in a towering rage, and shouted at us until we recovered a little from the numbing shock.

"Look! Look! The blood—footprints!" He tore open a cupboard and pointed triumphantly, whilst the cold wind of the coming day blew on our hot faces. Before us was a secret window, which had been masked by the sham cupboard. We were about to approach when Rousseau caught us both by the arm.



The "Passage de la Grande Pinte,"
Through which the gang of "Six Toes" escaped Inspector Louys.

THE CLUE OF THE SIX TOES.

"DON'T move! Look on the ledge. See, there is the print of a naked foot in blood—and it has *six toes!* That is what was on the balcony of Elena's room. Not finger-prints, but a footprint."

We looked, and saw for the first time that grotesque seal, which finally convicted the monster who made it.

"The Arab is dead," the Brigadier said, "but before he died he whispered, 'Not all killed—cupboard.' That's what brought me back."

When M. Dufresne was shown what we had found he shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

"This is a case for M. Bertillon; it's beyond me. Those three were the men we were searching for. They simply sat among the men they had killed and feigned death. Come, we can do nothing more until our chief has been here."

Later in the day I learned that the terrible twisted appearance of the men we had found sitting at the table was due to cyanic acid, which had been hypodermically injected into the back of the neck between the vertebræ.

Bundles of counterfeit notes were discovered in their pockets, and each one held a scrap of paper clutched in his hand, on which was written the single word, "Traitor!" They were unknown at the identity department, and M. Bertillon was of the opinion that all three were Americans, for their clothes and boots bore the names of New York firms. Their photographs and finger-prints were at once sent to London and New York.

Upon investigation we learned that the carpet-seller had been shut in an empty cell at the police station. A few minutes later a drunken fool, with the shoulders and nose of a pugilist, had assaulted the police on duty outside. The police had shut him in the cell which contained the Arab. An hour later, when the officer on duty looked through the sliding panel, both had disappeared! The massive lock had been picked and the bars of a small window leading to the street had been wrenched apart.

Dufresne was furious when he learned how easily his men had been fooled.

"You might have guessed that he was not drunk," he raved. "It was our man—the head of the gang—Six Toes; I feel sure of that. Filoche must have possessed some terrible knowledge to cause this rogue to risk everything in order to gain his release. Perhaps that was why he shot him after killing the other three."

BANNISTER LENDS A HAND.

IT was nearly evening when the door of my office opened and a burly form stalked in. At first I did not recognize the visitor, but a glance at the hand stretched out to me—a curious signet ring on the little finger—caused me to jump up with a shout of joy.

"Bannister, my dear fellow! I'm glad to see you."

"H'm!" my friend grunted. "I'll have to take a permanent job here, I can see that; but this business of the six toes is the limit. Is the fellow a madman?"

"Bertillon thinks the mark was made with a rubber pad."

"I see—a kind of seal. 'Captain Kidd, his mark,' eh? Well, it's possible; but what I want to know is how did he get down from the window in the Rue Vallais and again last night at the hotel? Can he fly? That reminds me. Those three fellows—I've just seen them. They were all American crooks, and badly wanted by the New York police."

"Then you knew them?"

"Certainly. They were real swells, too—only worked in the best hotels and on the big liners. But Dufresne wants you to go to that 'Grande Pinte' again, and I'm asked to go with you."

"Fine! I've just had my orders. We'll have to dress in rags; anything else will be noticed. Come along, we'll go," said I.

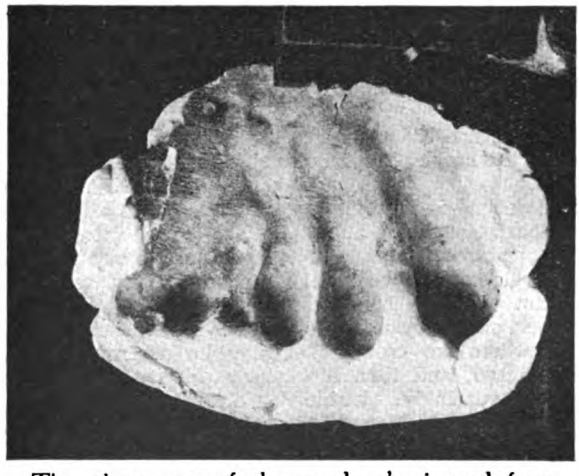
As I rose the telephone buzzed, and I heard the voice of M. Bertillon: "Go armed, my friend. Watch every movement in the 'Passage.' Above all, watch the roofs and windows. This fellow climbs down walls like a lizard. Find out all you can about Professor La Marra, distinguished biologist and surgeon, but use discretion. His museum and laboratory are near the 'Passage,' number 291. *Let me know what his nose is like.* Good luck!"

The prospect of another night in dirty rags was not alluring, but together with Bannister it was at least endurable.

THE MYSTERY OF THE "PASSAGE."

THE "Grande Pinte" was a well of darkness. We had discovered that a window of the Professor's flat looked out upon the foul alley. This window was brilliantly illuminated, and now and then a huge shadow would suddenly pass—like a flitting bird of prey.

In front of a tumbledown wine-shop, where Cartouche the bandit had formerly lived, were some empty vats. By crouching behind them we were able to watch with little risk of being seen. Time passed slowly. Then Bannister suddenly clutched my arm. From the house behind us came a low murmur of voices. Breathless with excitement, we saw a dim face peer out between some rotting trellis. Then, at a muttered word, several shadows moved silently across the narrow street. We counted five. One was a woman. They stopped opposite our refuge and busied themselves with something which produced a metallic clang. Either a sliding door or cellar-flap had opened. For a moment the glow of an electric torch illumined the group and fell full on the face of the woman. I started violently, for I knew her. Then a second clang and total darkness followed.



The plaster-cast of the murderer's six-toed foot, which led to his arrest.

"Did you see her face?" Bannister whispered at my ear. "That looks bad for the Professor."

"Yes," I replied. "It was Joselita Sanchez, the circus artiste. She works with Paolo in a trapeze act at the Cirque Medrano. Why do you say it looks bad for the Professor?"

"Well, all Paris knows he's in love with

her and that Paolo openly insulted him not long ago."

"Then perhaps they are sent by him to kill La Marra. S-sh!"

The clash of metal on stone again sounded. Then the same five shapes slipped by us towards the door leading to the Rue Charenton.

"After them," I whispered. "I'll stay here. Run to the other end and round by the Rue aux Loups. Don't go through the front entrance. They may be watching. Rousseau and Colbert are at the 'Lapin Blanc,' two doors away." Bannister vanished, running fast, and I settled down to watch and wait.

THE HYENA SQUEAL AGAIN.

IT was nearly an hour before my friend joined me again.

"Colbert and two others are following those five. I think this will be a good night's work. Anything new?"

I was about to reply when I felt my companion quiver. Bannister was crouching and staring at the square of light above which was the Professor's window. I saw that now not one but several shadows flitted back and forth across the window. Suddenly the green-white glow changed to a dull red, and I heard again that hyena squeal which had heralded the tragedy at Montmartre. The sound made our blood run cold. Almost at once the red glow faded and darkness pressed on us like a material thing.

"My God, what a horrible sound!" Bannister said.

"Yes," I replied. "I heard it last night when we waited outside the hotel. What do you suggest?"

"S-sh! Listen! Someone is moving."

Again we heard a door swing back and a huge shapeless bulk appeared. Our eyes were of little use in the gloom, but we could see that it was a man. Despite his size, he moved with noiseless steps towards the tiny ruined building where we crouched. We waited until he entered, and then followed, using our torches sparingly. Inside the *café* fallen bricks and rusty iron made a soundless advance difficult. Before us was a door, and from under the shrunken boards came a ray of light. A murmur of voices caused us to jump hurriedly behind a pile of bricks; the door swung open and shut, and a lithe figure passed, but in the momentary illumination we had both caught sight of a swarthy face and great bulging shoulders.

"*The nose!*" my friend whispered. "Did you see it? And the eyes with their twisted eyebrows? That was the Professor. And the door leads into the back room of the 'Lapin Blanc.' Come along; we must see where he goes."

But although we explored all the corners and doors of the "Passage," we saw no sign of La Marra—nor had our colleagues outside seen anyone leave. We decided at last to return to the Sûreté to report. We gained the Rue aux Loups without incident, and were lucky enough to find a taxi. It was daylight when we arrived at the Sûreté. Rousseau was there, greatly excited.

"The body of a young girl has been found in the Seine at the Quai Bercy," he exclaimed. "She has not yet been identified. And Paolo, the acrobat, has disappeared. Colbert followed those men from the 'Grande Pinte.' He caught them trying to set fire to a small push-cart which was hidden in a boat-house near the river. The boards are blood-stained, and against one side is that horrible print of the foot with six toes. A man and woman got away, but the others are in the cells. The girl, whose body we dragged from the river, was killed in an atrocious manner. We are certain now that Professor La Marra, although a well-known scientist with an excellent reputation, is the leader of the gang. Furthermore, the Spanish woman, Joselita Sanchez, who was Paolo the acrobat's partner, has been seen in the Professor's company more than once. What have you to report?"

When I described the scene in the "Passage," and told him of the weird cry we had heard, his eyes glittered.

Just then the telephone buzzed, and for a minute Rousseau listened attentively.

"Right you are," came his reply. "I will see to it. The girl's body has been identified," he said, turning to us. "It is Mlle. Mimi Delcart. Bertillon wants you to come to his office at once."

We found the famous man with M. Dufresne. They listened in silence to our report. When we had finished, Bertillon said:—

"We dare not wait. Valuable evidence may be destroyed whilst we are idle. I have almost completed my case, but I still want your help. La Marra may already have murdered Paolo. Perhaps, even, that hyena cry was the last sound the acrobat heard. Now listen. Here is the card of a distinguished English surgeon. Do you think you can play the part?" And he turned to Bannister.

"I'll try."

"Very well. I want you to call on this Professor Pedro La Marra. His museum is famous. Go there at five, when the Professor is generally at home. Whilst you keep him talking, your colleague will explore the passage behind the cellar door. If I'm not here when you return, report to Dufresne.

By the way, Bannister, have a good look at his boots."

Bannister nodded, and we both withdrew, to snatch a few hours' rest.

THE SECRET OF THE TUNNEL.

AT five we met in the Rue Charenton. A signal had been agreed upon in case one of us got into trouble, and when I had seen Bannister enter the Professor's house I walked down the "Grande Pinte." It was already dark, and I managed to raise the two heavy iron flaps and slip down unobserved.

Water dripped from the roof and the air was foul with some strange odour almost like that of stale acids. I carefully counted my steps and felt sure when I arrived at a massive iron door that I was under the house Bannister had entered. There was a brass handle in the door and I grasped this firmly. Instantly agonizing pains twisted my limbs, the torch slipped from my hand, and my chest laboured with the throbbing of the electric current passing through me. In a dim, semi-conscious way I heard a snarling laugh, then—blessed relief—the current was shut off, and I dropped to the ground helpless and faint. My hands were twisted behind me and fastened, and a stifling cloth wound about my head. Strong hands lifted and carried me along what must have been a very narrow gallery. Finally I was thrown to the ground, where for a long time I remained motionless, recovering slowly. Presently I again heard voices, and a heavy body fell with a thud and rolled against me. Then silence once more. Cautiously I felt along the mass pressing on my arms. Abruptly my heart contracted. I had encountered a hand, and on that hand was a ring which I knew well.

"Jim!" I called through the heavy cloth over my face. "Jim—Bannister—old friend—for God's sake answer!" As though my voice had brought back consciousness, my friend gave a muffled groan; then, to my amazement, I heard a choking laugh.

"That you?" came his voice. "They've got us. I can hardly breathe. The Professor is a wonder. He showed me some wonderful ancient skulls, and whilst I bent over them a cloth was twisted round my face, and a punch from a fist like a hammer put me to sleep. We're fine investigators, to be caught like babies! Say, what'll they do to us? Try to reach the rope on my arms."

"It's not a rope, it's a chain," I gasped. "I felt it just now."

The former haunt of the bandit Cartouche.

The wine-vats shown are those behind which Mr. Ashton-Wolfe and Bannister concealed themselves.

LA MARRA IS BETRAYED.

AFTER this both of us lay silent, trying to think, but the air which came to our lungs was foul with some heavy drug. My senses had begun to play tricks when, like cool, sweet water on the lips of a desert traveller, a cold gust of air blew on my face. The scarf had gone, and my hands were free. Over me I saw the stern, anxious face of my chief, M. Bertillon, whilst all around my colleagues stood and watched.

'A close call, my friend. Another hour and both of you would have been in the Seine. This brave girl here, Paulette, rang

me up—— Never mind the rest. Can you stand? We've got the Professor's house surrounded and we can reach it through these tunnels. Here, drink some of this."

I swallowed the strong spirit, and new life throbbed through my arteries. Bannister was kneeling near me, already normal again, and in the shadows I saw a young girl, a blood-stained bandage round her head.

It was a queer place we were in. The tunnel must have been built centuries ago, for everywhere we saw traces of Gothic arches and burial niches, and in one place many skulls and thigh bones had been grouped around a complete skeleton.

Joselita:

"Some forgotten branch of our Catacombs," said M. Bertillon, noting my glance. "It leads into the modern shaft where you were caught."

Finally we came to the iron door, but now it gaped wide, and a sturdy policeman stood on each side.

"Give the signal for our men to enter the house," said my chief.

Steep stairs led to the Professor's flat, which was guarded by another door. A man wearing rubber gloves turned the handle and pulled it back. With a rush we were inside, just as whistles shrilled and sticks beat against the outer door. The Professor, in trousers and shirt, met us on the threshold of a white-walled laboratory. In each hand he held a pistol. Red flames instantly spat from the barrels, but before he could fire again he was seized and the weapons wrenched from his hands. One look at the glaring eyes and foam-flecked lips told us that we were dealing with a madman. Suddenly he ceased to struggle, and his gaze fastened on a huddled, blood-stained bundle which my comrades were tenderly lifting from the floor. It was the girl Paulette. She had received both shots from the monster's pistols. As I turned, a wild, horrible, gurgling laugh, which ended in the squeal of a wild beast, burst from the Professor. It was the sound we had heard twice before.

"That's the death-yell of the Martinique Voodoo priests," M. Bertillon gasped. "He must be from the West Indies."

The dreadful laugh had ended in a faint sibilant breathing, sickening in its note of bestial satisfaction. Holding La Marra by twisted chains, four Sûreté officers threw him across a table and dragged off his shoes, and there, before our eyes, was the strange sight of feet bearing *six toes!*

"Take him away," Bertillon ordered, and he was dragged downstairs to a waiting car, in which were already four others of the madman's gang.

THE MUSEUM OF HORRORS.

WE then began a methodical examination of the flat. In the museum were several complete skeletons, hanging on metal stands and protected by glass cases.

M. Bertillon smashed a pane and made several tests. Then he pointed a shaking hand at the grim exhibits.

"These were supposed to be prehistoric, but the yellow colour is artificial. They are the remains of his victims. This must have gone on for years. No doubt many of those strange disappearances which have remained unsolved mysteries will now at last be cleared up. Look!" And our chief pulled away a rubber curtain from before a large stone bath.

We all started back with a shout of horror; the missing acrobat was found. The acid in the bath was still bubbling and seething.

In the study a cosy lamp illuminated a large table on which were strewn a number of books and surgical instruments. There was also a kind of diary, and I saw that the entries were in cipher. Waving us back, M. Bertillon sat down and examined the volumes. Page after page was turned hurriedly, and his busy pencil flew over the leaves of his famous note-book, now the treasured possession of the Sûreté. At last Bertillon replaced the books with a sigh of content.

"See!" he began. "This Pedro La Marra believes himself to be the descendant of Papaloi La Marra, a former Voodoo priest. His story is here," and he placed his hand on a small dingy volume. "Papaloi La Marra and all his kin had six toes, and this peculiarity was supposed by the priests to be the sign of Don Pedro—the negro name for the Evil One. These priests were great sorcerers and fanatic devil-worshippers, and believed that the heart and the brain of human victims contained the essence of life and power. Whether this man we have caught is truly of the sorcerer's brood or not I don't know, but he believes it. Perhaps in his crazed brain the fact that he possessed six toes induced the belief. These former priests always left a blood-stained footprint behind when they claimed a

victim, and they were credited with the ability to climb up and down perpendicular walls. This fellow certainly appears to possess that gift. As yet we cannot conjecture how he succeeded in gaining the bedroom of the girl Elena, nor how he escaped from the Rue Lepic, unless he clambered down the wall. He may, however, have used ropes and hooks, for at the Rue Lepic he was not alone. Yet they all got away. If he had not added the printing of counterfeit money to his other crimes, we might never have suspected him."

"Did you find the plant?" Bannister asked, eagerly.

"Oh, yes, in that underground tunnel—a beautiful modern press and perfect plates. And we've received a cable from New York. Those three men we found in Montmartre had friends, and we now have their descriptions. It will be a clean sweep.

"By a strange freak of chance, the actress, Mlle. Elena, once broke her leg, and the tibia of a female skeleton in there bears the mark of a similar fracture. She was, I imagine, an innocent accomplice of the Professor, who must have in some way made use of her. Her death became necessary when she learned the truth. Perhaps her jewels had something to do with this too. She was abducted from her bedroom, carried to this house, and killed. I think that La Marra entered her room from the roof. The marks left by his confederates prove that he was not alone. Felipe, whose finger-prints we found on the counterfeit bank-note in Elena's room, was captured to-night and has confessed. He escaped from Cayenne with the help of a twin brother who took his place and died there.

"I imagine that Pedro La Marra was madly infatuated with the circus girl Joselita, and craved money to outdo his rivals in generosity. We know the girl introduced him to an American crook who needed help to print and pass the counterfeit notes. Thus, as usual, a woman has been the cause of his ruin. Two women, rather, for the unfortunate Paulette loved the Professor, who had promised to marry her. Mad with jealous rage, she had watched La Marra's growing infatuation for Joselita. Paulette had persuaded the men the Professor killed in Montmartre, and whose bodies we found round the table, to betray him, but the Algerian had warned La Marra in time. It was Paulette who shot Sidi Filoche when he tried to escape with the others, thus bringing us on the scene unexpectedly. Paulette had then informed Joselita's circus partner, Paolo, that Joselita visited the Professor, and Paolo had gone to the house in the Rue Charenton. La Marra killed him on the night you were hidden in the 'Grande Pinte.' As a last resource Paulette telephoned to me to-night that you were both prisoners in the tunnel, and explained the mechanism of the electric doors."

Bannister emerging from the tunnel where he and Mr. Ashton-Wolfe were imprisoned.

NO confession was ever obtained from Professor La Marra. He died some years later in a criminal lunatic asylum. M. Bertillon had guessed aright. The man was a Creole from La Martinique. His arrest caused a sensation, for the man had written many learned monographs, and had been considered an eminent surgeon and biologist. Although his accomplices confessed to the making and passing of counterfeit notes, they denied all knowledge of the murders, and they were sent to New Caledonia for life.

(Next month: "The Double Life of Dr. Bougrat, Physician and Apache.")

A Batch of Easy Puzzles

By

HENRY E. DUDENEY

MR. TIMOTHY PRINGLE was a London tradesman whose business career had been very profitable, and he had decided to retire into private life before he was too old or infirm to enjoy the rest that he felt he had earned. He had been lucky enough to secure an interesting old Manor House in one of the southern counties, and made himself and his wife very comfortable. They had a great fondness for children, although unfortunately they had none of their own. One cynic remarked that if they had been blessed with any they would have been less attached to them, but he was a crusty old bachelor. Every Christmas the Pringles gave Christmas parties for the youngsters in their neighbourhood. These were much appreciated both for their lavish hospitality and for the ingenious way in which he contrived to vary the entertainment.

On the occasion of which we are writing the company were gathered during the evening round a big log fire in the hall, and he proposed that they should talk about puzzles.

"Of course," said Mr. Pringle, "we are not, on this occasion, going to have any hard nuts to crack, but just a pleasant trial of our wits. So you must all do your best to perplex the others. We do not want so much to rack our brains as to be amused, so do not hesitate to give us any old chestnuts that may occur to you. If a few may be acquainted with them, to many of the others they may happen to be quite new. I will start by asking you what it is that will go up a chimney down or down a chimney down, but will not go up a chimney up or down a chimney up."

This amused them, but they could not think of any answer until Reggie Brown, a smart boy attending the local Grammar School, suggested that it might be an umbrella, which was, of course, quite right. His success encouraged him to ask another riddle.

"Why should we never tell a man to take a back seat?"

But Bessie Wilson happened to know the answer, and soon gave it away by shouting: "It is because he might take affront."

TWO ANAGRAMS.

Mrs. Pringle then asked them if they liked Anagrams, and if so they might try to make a well-known word out of the letters CART HORSE.

Somebody suggested that they might, at the same time, do the same with the letters in MAD POLICY. Everybody was provided with pencil and paper for the puzzles, but many of them were not solved during the evening, but were gladly taken away for later consideration.

DIVISION OF LABOUR.

Mr. Pringle told them of a man he knew whose house was four miles from the railway station. One day he had to go with two heavy bags of equal weight, to the station and his horse had suddenly gone lame. There was not time to hire a conveyance, so he had to walk. But he could not alone manage the two bags, so his gardener and his boy insisted on carrying the luggage. The gardener was an old man and the boy not sufficiently strong, and, as he believed in a fair division of labour, he settled that all three should walk to the station together and share the burden equally among them. So they started off with the gardener carrying one bag and the boy the other while he himself worked out in his head the best way to arrange for the transfer of the bags as they went along.

The puzzle was how the thing was to be done.

FATHERS AND SONS.

When they had finished discussing this Tommy Harrison told them that a charitable gentleman once divided seven-and-sixpence between two sons and two fathers so that each father and each son received 2s. 6d. For a few minutes they found this a little perplexing, but they soon hit on the answer.

"LISTENING-IN."

At this point it was noticed that Reggie was tying a piece of string to the poker and was asked what he was doing. He said:—

"I am going to 'listen-in.' When I press the two ends of the string to my ears and let the poker swing against the fire-dog or the mantelpiece I can hear Big Ben striking."

They all tried this in turn and found the result very surprising.

A NUMBER PUZZLE.

"You have all found at school," said Mr. Pringle, "that there are many funny things in numbers. In early Victorian times a popular character on the stage was called Lord Dundreary. I think the play was 'Our American Cousin.' He used to count the fingers of his two hands from left to right: 'One, two, three,' etc., up to ten, showing that he had ten fingers. Then he would count backwards: 'Ten, nine, eight, seven, six,' which, added to the other five, made eleven—'a thing which no fellah can understand.'"

HENS AND EGGS.

"Now," he continued, "can you answer this? If a hen and a half will lay an egg and a half in a day and a half, how many eggs will seven hens lay at the same rate in six days?"

Most of them thought that this must be very easy, but only one or two of the sharper youngsters got the answer correct.

WHERE IS IT?

Then Mr. Pringle let them all look at the square here shown, containing letters of the alphabet, and they asked what it meant. He said that if they interpreted it correctly it would tell them of some undiscoverable place Where is it? This beat them all, but in a very short time Mr. Pringle explained its cryptic meaning

A	B	C	D	E
F	G	H	I	J
K	L	M	N	O
P	Q	R	S	T
U	V	X	Y	Z

HORSE AND NO HORSE.

"Do you know this?" asked Vera Ross. "Which has most legs, a horse or no horse?"

Of course, some of them knew the answer, but the others were amused when they had it explained to them that a horse has four legs but no horse has ten legs.

A BROTHER TO ASSIST HER.

"Here is another conundrum," said Mrs. Pringle. "If a man saw his sister fall down a well, why could he not help her?"

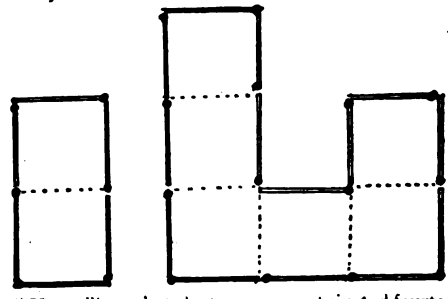
After some thought they all confessed that they could see no reason why he should not.

"But remember," said Mrs. Pringle, "that it was his sister." This they thought made no difference whatever until she showed them that a man cannot be a brother and assist her too. This produced much merry laughter.

A MATCH PUZZLE.

"Now let's draw round the table," said Mr. Pringle, "because I want to show you a new match puzzle and perhaps give you a few other things that you can more conveniently tackle there."

When they were seated he produced some boxes of matches and told them to lay out twenty matches in the way shown in our illustration.



"You will see that the two groups of six and fourteen matches form two enclosures, so that one space enclosed is exactly three times as large as the other. Now transfer one match from the larger to the smaller group and with the seven and thirteen enclose two spaces again, one exactly three times as large as the other. Twelve of the matches must remain unmoved from their present positions, and, of course, you know that there must be no duplicated matches or loose ends."

Only one boy succeeded in giving the correct answer.

MONEY MAKES MONEY.

"Here is a story that I know will amuse you," said Mrs. Pringle "A man gave a boy sixpence and promised to repeat the gift as soon as the youngster had made it into ninepence. Five minutes later the boy returned. 'I have made it ninepence,' he said, at the same time handing his benefactor threepence. 'How do you make that out?' he was asked. 'I bought three-pennyworth of apples' 'But that does not make it into ninepence.' 'I should rather think it did!' was the boy's reply. 'The applewoman has threepence, hasn't she? Very well, I have three-pennyworth of apples, and I have just given you the other threepence. What's that but ninepence?'"

APPLE-SAUCE.

When they had finished laughing at the cunning of the boy, Reggie said:—

"Speaking of apples, I remembered that somebody asked me the other day when is an apple pie?"

"You mean," said Vera, "what is an apple pie?"

"No, I don't," answered Reggie, "and I don't

mean why is an apple pie, or where is an apple pie, but just what I said—when is an apple pie?"

They got very impatient over this and all agreed that it was a silly question and like that other one, "Why does a chimney-swallow smoke?" But Reggie insisted that it was all right and finally explained that an apple was pie when cooked in a dish with pastry over it. They accepted the answer, but felt a little humiliated.

THE CYCLIST AND THE EGGS.

"Now I will give you one," said Bessie. "An enthusiastic cyclist, twenty-eight years of age, rode thirty-three and a half miles before his breakfast. When he arrived at his destination he was very hungry. How many eggs will he eat on an empty stomach?"

"Tom Hood," said Mr. Pringle, "would have asked, 'on whose stomach?'"

Bessie explained that she, of course, meant his own.

MORE MAGIC NUMBERS.

When Bessie had given her answer, for they could not themselves discover it, Harold Joyce asked them if they could take away seven-tenths from five so that exactly four remained.

After some consideration he admitted that there was a trick in it, but he had to show them the answer.

THE CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.

Then Mrs. Pringle asked them to get to work with their pencils and paper on this little puzzle. To complete her Christmas-tree a lady bought sixty little articles for five shillings. All the wooden toys cost 3d. each, all the tin toys 2d. each, and every bag of sweets ½d. each. As she bought just five times as many tin toys as wooden, how many were there of each kind to make up the exact money?

AN EGG PUZZLE.

"While you have been working out that," said Tommy, "I have been trying to recall an egg puzzle that Bessie's question reminded me of. I think I have it right.

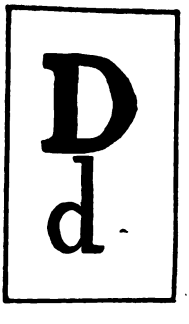
"Twice as many eggs I'll eat
As you, if you will give me two."
"An equal number we shall get
If I receive two eggs from you."
'Twas thus two hungry men conversed—
How many eggs had each at first?

THE SQUARE OF SOLDIERS.

"A man arranged his men in a solid square," said Vera, "and had thirty-nine men over. He then started increasing the number of men on a side by one, but found that fifty new men would be needed to complete the new square. Can you tell me how many men the officer had?"

This interested them and they got to work at it, but as it contained no trick many found the answer.

THE TWO D'S.



"Here is another letter puzzle," said Mrs. Pringle, who had written down two d's on a piece of paper and passed it round.

"This," she said, "represents something of considerable value. What is it? You will notice that the upper letter is a capital D. It speaks for itself."

Harold was the first to find the answer, but he made the funny confession that he discovered it before he knew why.

CLIPPING THE COINS.

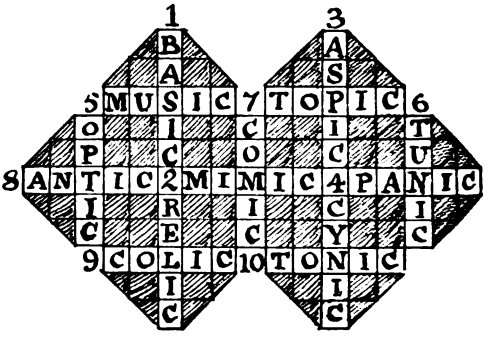
Jim Mason then asked them this question: "If a man had a sovereign, a shilling, a penny, and a farthing and he wanted to clip the same fractional part from each of the four coins so that their value should be exactly £1, what fraction must he clip off?"

Mr. Pringle remarked that it was clear that we must assume that the face value of every coin was its intrinsic value and that clipping would proportionately reduce but not destroy the value of the coin.

(The answers to the unsolved little puzzles in the above article will be given next month, when "Perplexities" will be resumed.)

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

880.—CURIOUS CROSS-WORDS.



881.—A QUEER POSITION.

PLAY as follows and the given position will be reached on White's 30th move. I do not think the number of moves can be reduced.

1. Kt—Q B 3, Kt—Q B 3; 2. Kt—K 4, Kt—K 4; 3. Kt—B 6 ch., Kt P x Kt; 4. Kt—R 3, Kt—B 6 ch.; 5. Kt P x Kt, Kt—R 3; 6. P—Q 3, P—Q 3; 7. B—K 3, B—K 3; 8. Q—Q 2, Q—Q 2; 9. Q—B 3, Q—B 3; 10. K—Q 2, K—Q 2; 11. B—Kt 2, B—Kt 2; 12. Q R—K Kt sq., Q R—K Kt sq.; 13. B—B sq., B—B sq.; 14. Kt—B 4, Kt—B 4; 15. R—Kt 6, K—K sq.; 16. R—R 6, R—Kt 4; 17. R—Kt sq., R—R 4; 18. R—Kt 4, R—Kt sq.; 19. R—R 4, R—Kt 8; 20. R—Kt 6, R—R 8; 21. R—Kt 8, R—Kt 4; 22. R—R 8, R—Kt 8; 23. R—Kt 4, Q—Q 2; 24. R—Kt 8, Q—Q sq.; 25. K—K sq., B—B sq.; 26. Q—Q 2, B—K 3; 27. Q—Q sq., Kt—Kt 6; 28. B—B sq., B—B sq.; 29. Kt—Kt 6, B P x Kt; 30. B P x Kt.

882.—A RETURN JOURNEY.

THE distance must have been 13⅓ miles, and if the messenger did this at five miles an hour it would take 2⅔ hours, and his return at three miles an hour would take 4⅓ hours, making together 7 hours for the double journey.

883.—DROP LETTER PUZZLE.

WITH the vowels restored the quotation from Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" reads as follows:—

"To be wroth with one we love,
Doth work like madness in the brain."

884.—THE STOPPED CLOCK.

THE clock must have stopped at 7h. 38m. 10 10/11s. when the hour and minute hands would be exactly together and the seconds hand show 11 seconds all but 1/11th.

Presentation Picture

ATALANTA *of Arcadia Fleetest of mortals, but defeated by the lure of the golden apples from the garden of the Hesperides.*

An art plate free from advertising matter and mounted for framing, of the original drawing of Atalanta's race by Fortunino Matania, R.I., will be sent free of charge on receipt of a wrapper from a bottle of Wincarnis and three penny stamps for postage and packing. Address as below and mark envelope *Atalanta*.

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NOTICE

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Recently I received a letter from an old student who for private reasons did not complete his course although he had paid his fees. This was three or four years ago. He writes to ask if he is at liberty to complete his course.

This notice is to inform all Bennett College students, past or present, if for any reason whatever they have not completed their course, no matter how long ago it may have been, their names are still kept and they are at liberty to resume their studies until their course is completed, in fact we shall welcome them back.

Some students who may have taken up a technical course may prefer to transfer to a commercial course or vice versa. We teach all the technical trades and all the commercial professions by post in all parts of the world, and we specialise in all the examinations in connection with them. If any student has joined for a course that does not suit him he is at liberty to transfer. We hope all Bennett College students will make this known to their friends.

If you want any advice write to me at this address, The Bennett College, Dept. 6, Sheffield.

J. H. Bennett

F.R.S.A., M.I.Mar.E., A.I.Struct.E., M.B.I.P.S., etc.,

Governor of

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474. 72.
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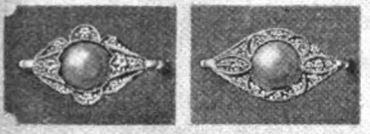

531. 532.
Rings with selected Ciro Pearl, set with scientific Diamonds on platinette. Gold shank. **£1 1 0** each.

4010. Two lustrous Ciro Pearls on scientific Diamond-studded bar.
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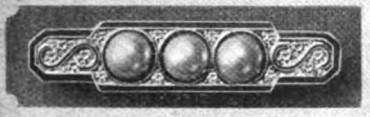
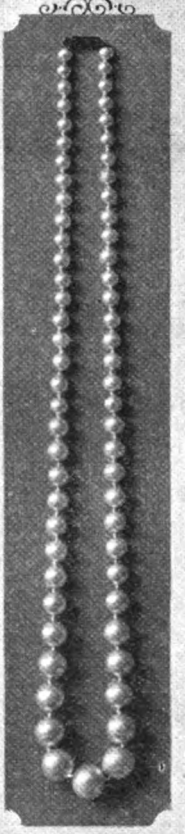


4034. Three selected Ciro Pearls, mounted with scientific Diamonds in enamel border. **£1 1 0**



Reduced photo of Ciro Pearl Necklet, 16ins. long, **£1 1 0**
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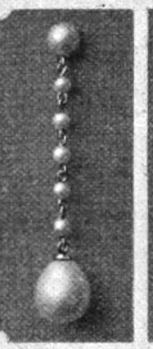

64. 94.
Selected Ciro Pearls on platinette chains. The Drop Pearl may be either pear-shaped or round.
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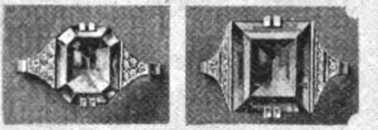

597. 598.
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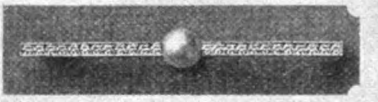
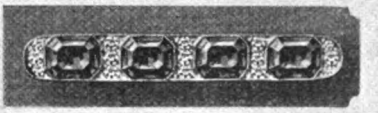


731. Selected Ciro Pearl on platinette bar, studded with scientific Diamonds.
£1 1 0



4009. A new design. Ciro Sapphires or Emeralds realistically mounted in platinette. **£1 1 0**

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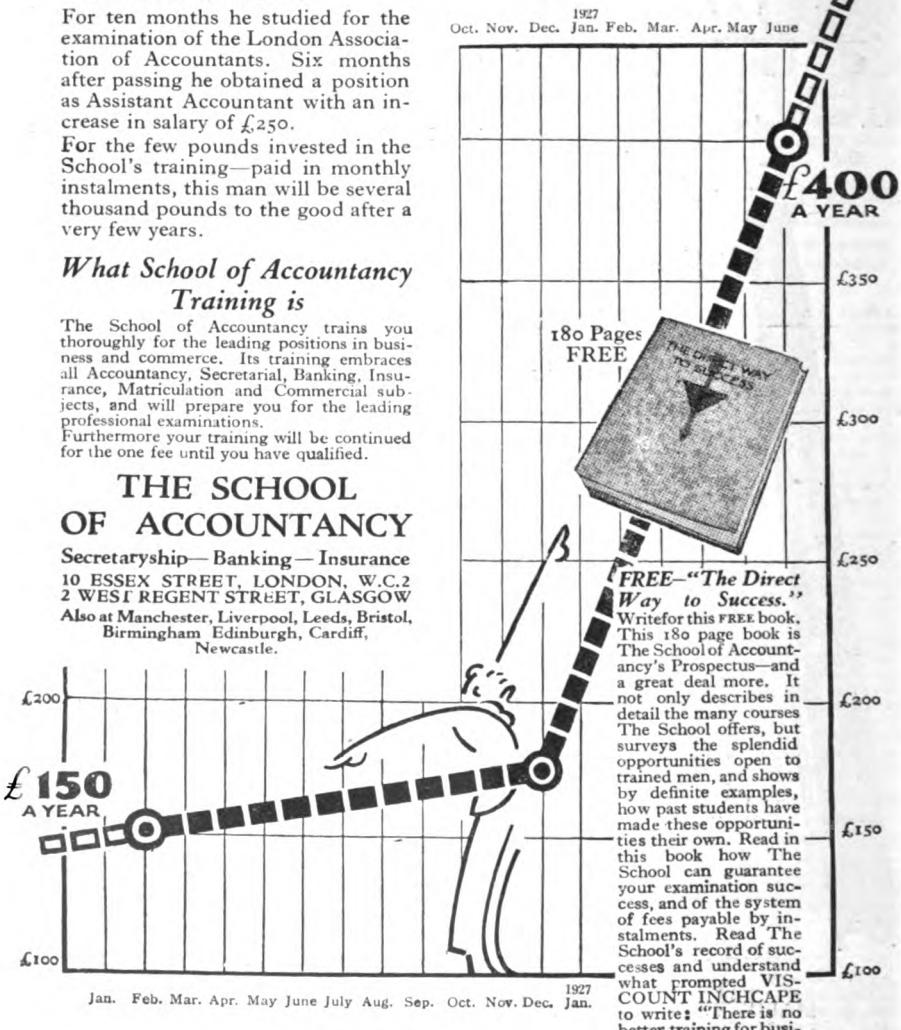

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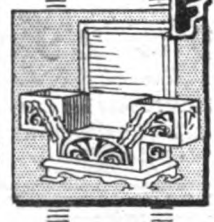

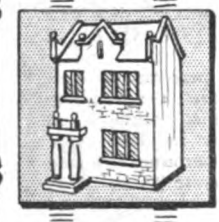

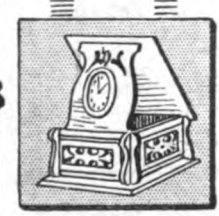

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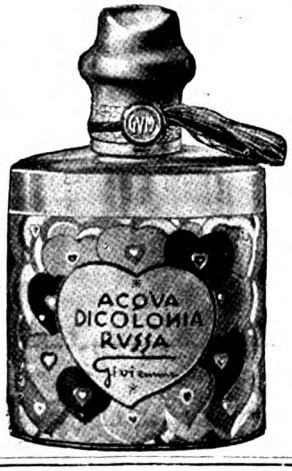

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Modelled with the fashionable silhouette as a guiding influence "Alpine" garments fit snugly and cosily and help greatly to give a clean, trim line to the figure.

This year the "Alpine" quality is even better than ever—yet it costs the same; its price is most moderate, its worth is very high.

Ask to see "Alpine" and look for the Dog's Head. Make your choice from the wide range of delightful fabrics . . . The various blendings of silk and wool are particularly attractive.

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Your own Outfitter stocks "Alpine" already—or can get it for you. Write to the address below for Booklet No. L48 which will show you many of the new styles. *Every "Alpine" garment is guaranteed by the manufacturers:—*

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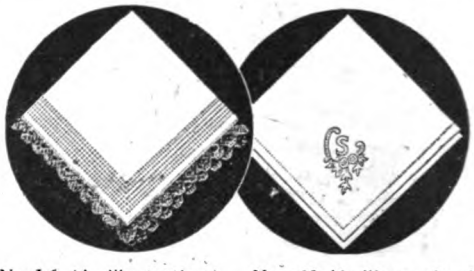
Robinson & Cleaver's solve a Christmas Problem with LINEN HANDKERCHIEFS



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STERILISES THE HANDKERCHIEF POCKET

AN "extra" service which "Vapex" renders the user is that it kills the germs which lurk and multiply in the dark corners of the handkerchief pocket. The handkerchief is also sterilised and does not cause re-infection every time it is used.

All Chemists, 2/- and 3/-

THOMAS KERFOOT & CO., LTD.

V34

(47)

Buy a *real* "Otterburn" for your Baby — and *beware* of imitations

A Gift for H.M. The Baby

Why not send an Otterburn Baby Rug this Christmas?

For the House where there's a Baby you could not send a more happy, more suitable gift than this parcel of Otterburn snuggle comfort for Baby.

Baby can do no more than 'crow' its appreciation, but Baby's Mother will think with pleasure, each day, of your thoughtfulness.

Prices and colours are given alongside.

If you should have any difficulty in obtaining Otterburn Rugs locally, we will supply you direct or send a Rug to any address you wish, post free.

Just post us your remittance for 13/11, stating colour needed and the address to which the Rug is to be sent—please also include the name and address of your Draper.

The *genuine* "Otterburn" is made from nought but *pure, new wool;* it is *naturally* soft and fleecy and, if washed with ordinary care, actually *improves* with washing.

Cheaper imitation Rugs, largely made from *re-used wool*, may, when new, look very much like an "Otterburn," but the wash-tub quickly reveals their inferiority.

Every genuine *all-new-wool* "Otterburn" bears the little tab illustrated below. Take no chances with Baby's health and comfort—look for the little tab and say "No," firmly, to all imitations.

Every hour of the twenty-four there's a good use for an "Otterburn." Waking or sleeping, your baby could not have a more faithful guardian 'gainst Baby chills and ills. For the Cot an "Otterburn" makes a cosy coverlet; when Baby "walks out" it does protecting duty as a pram rug; indoors it makes the snuggest nursing wrap. Handy, yet ample in size, the "Otterburn" measures 30 ins. by 36 ins., and is made in Grey, Cream, Sky, Saxe, Rose, Navy, and Biscuit colours. Price - - **13/11**

13/11 Otterburn Rug

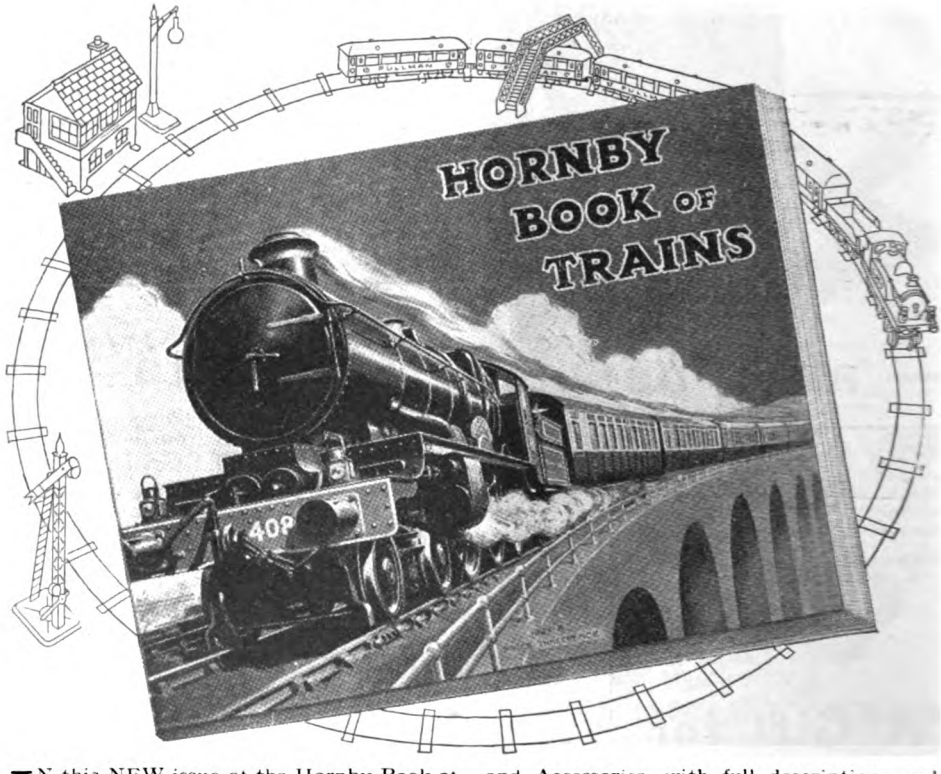
Made entirely from Pure, New Wool.

Sold by Drapers, Pram Sellers, etc.

Ask to see Otterburn Baby Rugs, and look for the little Tab (shown alongside). If your Draper is unable to supply, send us his name and address, with your own, enclosing remittance for 13/11, and stating colour needed. We will then supply you, post free, by return.

Otterburn Mill, Ltd., Otterburn Bridge, Northumberland

BOYS ! GET THE 1927 HORNBY BOOK OF TRAINS - IT'S THE BEST YET !



IN this NEW issue of the Hornby Book of Trains is told the fascinating story of the Life of a Locomotive. The preparation of its plans in the drawing office, the various stages of its building and erection, its trials, its career on the road, and its final withdrawal in favour of a later type—all this is described in detail and illustrated by a series of splendid photographic reproductions.

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"To Soothe and Smooth your Skin"
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Buy some to-day—they're delicious!

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(Orange Cartet)
Milk chocolate made with fruity raisins and choicest almonds!

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Perfectly plain, plainly perfect—a chocolate out of the ordinary!

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Made with fresh milk from English farms.

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"Ovaltine" stands supreme. It is not possible to produce a better food beverage.

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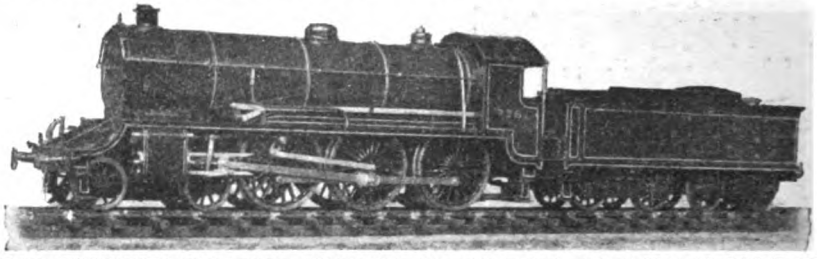

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YOUR GARDEN—A BIRD SANCTUARY.

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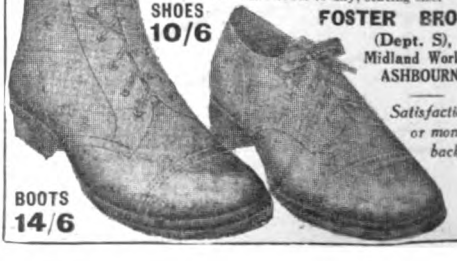
Full range of sizes for Ladies, Gents, Children: tan or black. Order to-day, stating size.



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(Dept. S),
Midland Works,
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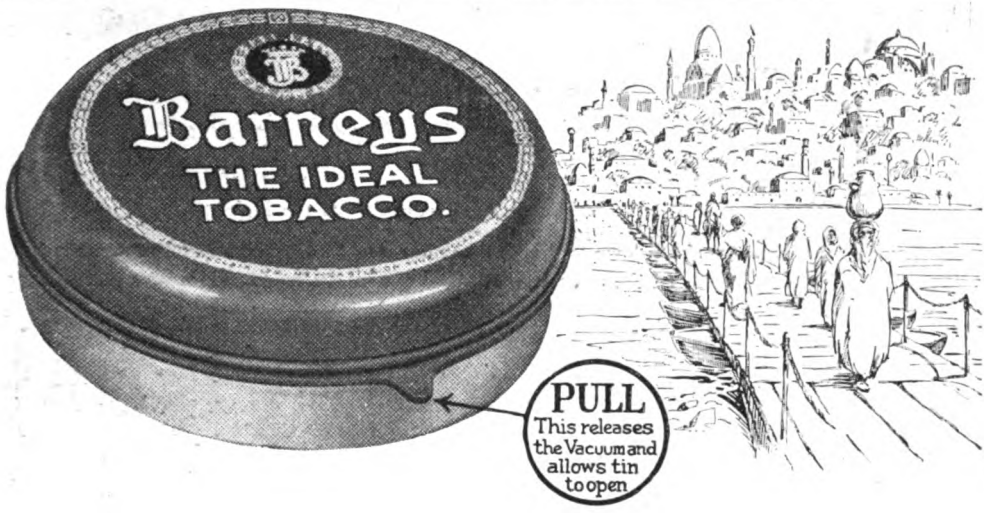

Factory Freshness the Whole World over

From the toiling Tyne to the Banks of the Tigris, the *original* freshness and fragrance of the Barneys Packing Rooms is imprisoned *and maintained* in this new "EVERFRESH" Tin.

In the intensely dry, and hot, climate of Iraq in the summer, Barneys is smoked with the same enjoyment encountered by, shall we say, the Clubman in Pall Mall: Barneys in the "EVERFRESH" Tin is *the same fresh Barneys everywhere*, constant, unaffected and unchanged.

Next to good Tobacco itself, this Barneys "EVERFRESH" Tin is perhaps the greatest blessing that a kindly Fate has sent to men who live and work and smoke in the wild places of the World: *It is a common denominator of latitude and location, which annihilates time and distance and makes all climates alike.*

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Barneys (*medium*), Punchbowle (*full strength*) and Parsons Pleasure (*the mild Barneys*) are each available in the "EVERFRESH" packing: 2 oz. size 2/3, 4 oz. 4/6, *and in the old familiar "FLAT" Tin* (2 oz. 2/3) *which is so convenient for the pocket.*

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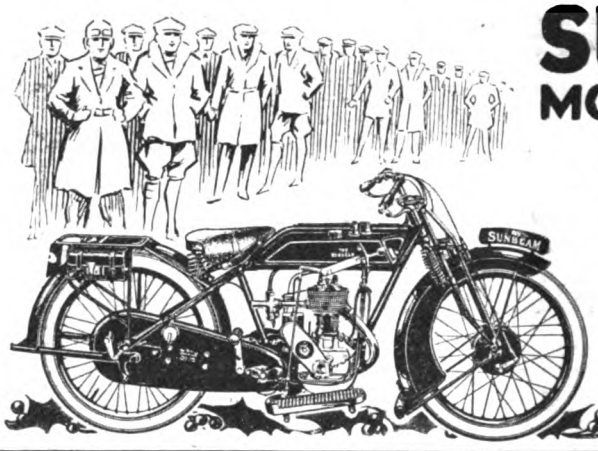

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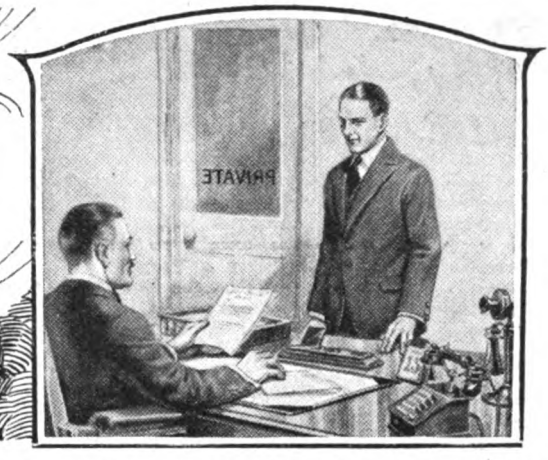

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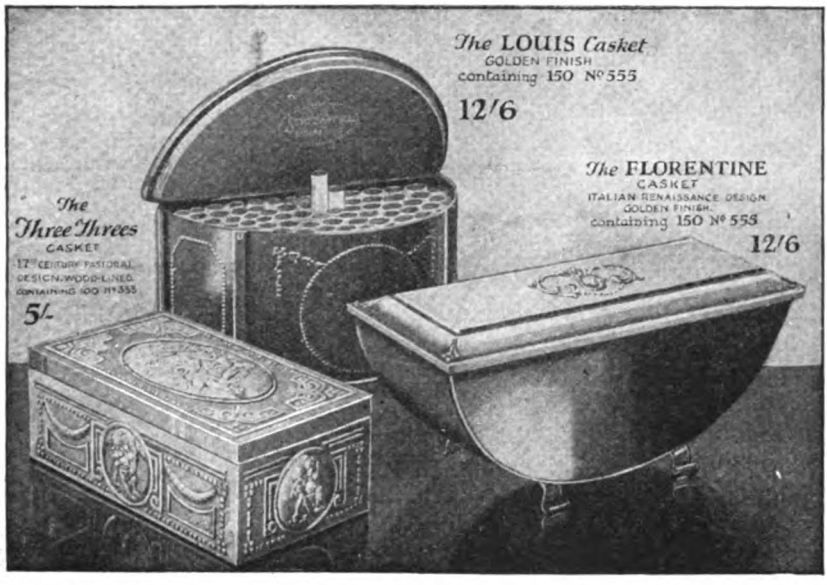

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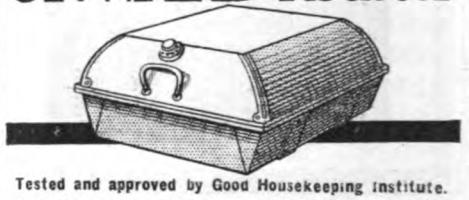
If your dealer cannot supply you, we will send you an "ONWARD" (size 12in. by 11in.) direct for 4/6 (carr. paid).

The **'ONWARD' Roaster**



Tested and approved by Good Housekeeping Institute.

May be obtained from any Ironmonger, or from Patentee and Sole Maker:

EDWIN CHAMBERS, LTD.,

"S" Dept., "Onward" Works, Leeds Rd., BRADFORD.

BRADFORD'S MANGLES

The name "Bradford" on a Wringer or Mangle is a guarantee of perfect workmanship. The experience gained in over 70 years of making Wringers and Mangles is put into every machine. The "V.C." Combined Table, Wringer and Mangle is specially designed for Flats and Small Houses. An efficient Mangle on washdays, it is easily converted into a handy table 34" by 18" for the remainder of the week.

No. 1. Rollers 21 in. by 3½ in. £5 : 15 : 0

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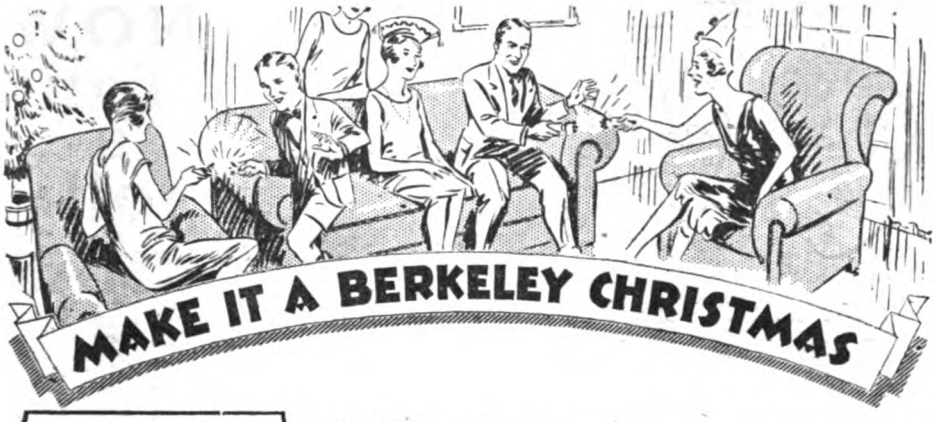
Rollers of selected English Sycamore. Supplied also with Chain Drive, extra. Carriage Paid. Liberal Discount for Cash with Order. Write for Catalogue No. 222B, illustrating this and other types, to the

MAKERS:

THOMAS BRADFORD & Co.,
141, High Holborn,
LONDON, W.C.1.

1, Deansgate,
MANCHESTER.

130, Bold Street.
LIVERPOOL.



Any piece of this Suite supplied separately.

BERKELEY EASY CHAIR

has always set a standard for value, and with the new FIBRE and HAIR stuffing it is unrivalled. Luxuriously upholstered, with long coppered-steel springs in seat, back, and front edge. Best birch frame

NEW CASH PRICE

78/6 or £4 : 2 : 6 :— 10/- with order and balance 10/- monthly.

Berkeley Wing Model

has large well-upholstered wings, and is higher in the back than the Berkeley, giving extra comfort and protection from draughts.

NEW CASH PRICE

90/- or £4 : 17 : 6 :— 10/- with order and balance 15/- monthly.

Berkeley Lounge Chesterfield

has an adjustable let-down end, which is absolutely reliable and its strength is such that when extended it can be used as an extra seat. Length, with end let down, 6ft.

NEW CASH PRICE

£9 or £9 : 10 : 0 :— 20/- with order and balance 20/- monthly.

LOOSE COVERS from 16/6

WHAT a world of difference the handsome Berkeley Upholstery would make in your home at Christmas, and for years afterwards. Give yourselves a substantial Christmas treat—one that will bring you luxurious comfort for a lifetime—install a Berkeley Easy Chair, Chesterfield, or complete Suite.

The wonderful resources of the great Berkeley factories, the largest in the World devoted to Upholstery, have made it possible to offer this magnificent furniture at prices which place it beyond competition. Splendidly upholstered, with real FIBRE AND HAIR stuffing, long coppered-steel springs, best birch frames. Covered in beautiful hard-wearing Damask, Cretonne or Tapestry of your own selection. You can have the whole Suite or any separate piece delivered to your home immediately on receipt of first small payment with your order. *Write now for Free Patterns.*

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OUR SUPREME GUARANTEE — We deliver immediately on Receipt of Deposit with Order, and if the value of any Berkeley Easy Chair or Chesterfield does not come up to expectations you may return it AT OUR EXPENSE and we will refund your money in full.

DELIVERED FREE in England and Wales.

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Branch Showrooms: 133, Victoria Street, Westminster, S.W.1; The Arcade, High Street, Croydon; *and* 16, The Parade, Watford.

NEW CASH PRICE for COMPLETE SUITE

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last night

What?

A tin of

CLARNICO

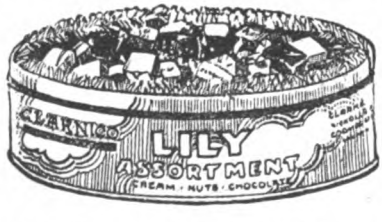
LILY ASSORTMENT

A delicious selection of Caramels including some Chocolate-covered ones.

PER **6**D. ¼ LB.

There is also CHOCOLATE LILY ASSORTMENT, containing a greater variety and all covered in chocolate, which costs 8d. per ¼ lb.

All Clarnico Confectionery is good Confectionery.



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NOW for a jolly XMAS

with plenty of Mason's Ginger Wine with its good cheer and tingling glow. A most delicious non-intoxicating wine for young and old.
Everyone says: "Yes Please" when it is made with

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A 9d. Bottle makes 100 Glasses

Of Chemists, Grocers and Stores everywhere

Send 1/- for a bottle and we will give you name of nearest retailer.

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As easy as A B C!

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The "Pandora" design, an original Old Davenport Pattern in a rich Chinese Blue.

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Tea Set, 21 piece ... **12/4**
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Carriage Paid in Great Britain.

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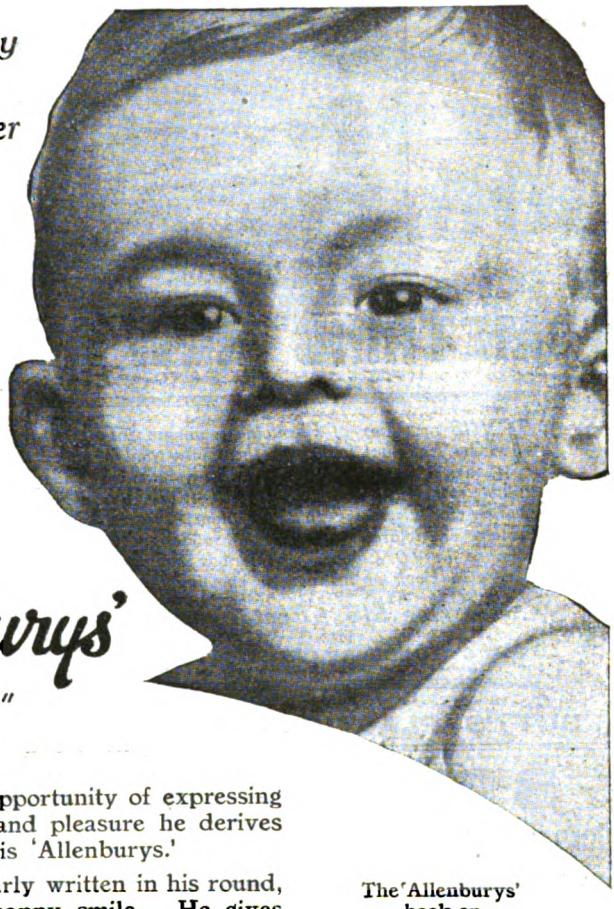
THE WINDSOR PORCELAIN CO. (Dept. S), Phœnix Works, Broad Street, Hanley, Staffs.

A Healthy Baby
makes
A Happy Mother



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Baby loses no opportunity of expressing the satisfaction and pleasure he derives from his 'Allenburys.'

He shows it clearly written in his round, rosy face and happy smile. He gives evidence of it in his sturdy limbs and cheerful disposition.

Mother knows, too, that the 'Allenburys' Foods represent a safe and reliable method of feeding when natural means are absent, being perfectly suited to the changing needs of baby's development.

The 'Allenburys' book on "Infant Feeding and Management," together with a sample of Food will be sent free on application. State baby's age.

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FOR THE GOOD OF BABYHOOD

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THIS new Box of Plasticine is unique. To ***Children*** *it is a fascinating Play Box that will keep them busy and absorbed in* ***making*** *things for hours. To the* ***Art Craftsman*** *it opens a Wonderland of New Designs, suitable for Wood Carving, Stencil Work, Needlework or Leather Work, Designs for Dresses, Hats, Cushions, Friezes, Book Covers, Table Tops, Curtains or Picture Frames. No two designs need ever be alike. Plasticine is made in 10 Colours. The box contains Tools and Cutters and an Illustrated Book of instructions showing the simplicity of the work.*

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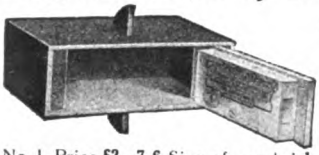

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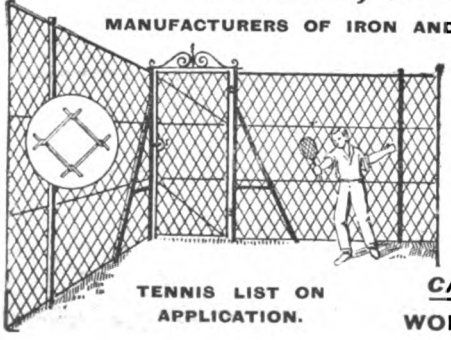

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Amazing Results from Annual Investment of Small Sum.

£3,000 AT AGE 55.

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A small deposit annually or half-yearly (amount depending on present age), to which are added profits upon profits, yields (assuming a present age of 35) the splendid sum of £3,000 at age 55. Or you can have, instead, a guaranteed income for life of £250.

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Winter's worst leaves the wearer of "PESCO" snug and secure, for the Pure Wool textures of this famous underwear frustrate the onslaughts of damp and chill as can no other material.

In "PESCO," too, the requirements of vigorous youth and active manhood are fully satisfied; maximum protection and comfort being afforded without sacrificing that perfect freedom of movement so essential to the energetic.

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SCOTCH & BEST

From all Drapers and Hosiers, in every underwear shape for Ladies, Gentlemen, and Children, also Hosiery and Sports Wear. For Young Children "Pesco" Baby Wear is recommended. Every garment guaranteed unshrinkable. In case of difficulty write for names of nearest agents.

PETER SCOTT & CO., LTD. (Dept. 5),
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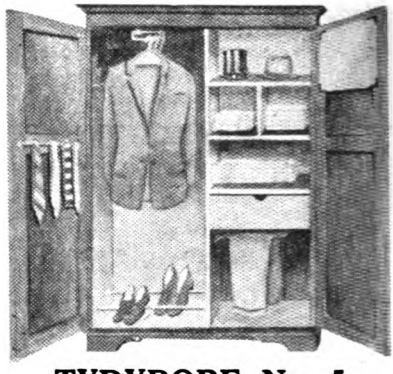
WOLFE & HOLLANDER, Ltd.

✲ A Gift that will ✲
✲ last a lifetime. ✲



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A splendidly finished and completely fitted Wardrobe in antique colour Oak with sliding rod, 6 coat hangers, boot rail, mirror, tie rail, and trouser rack. Dimensions: 5 ft. 7 in. high, 3 ft. 6 in. wide, 19 in. deep. **9GNS.**

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Part cost of packing for country orders, 7/6 extra.
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A Gift He Will Appreciate—The

Firmaband TIE

—THE BEST TIE MADE. Reqd

It is woven on the ***straight***, ensuring a firm band. Guaranteed NOT to stretch or twist. Firmaband Tie is made from generous length of heavy Pure Macclesfield Silk and is unlined. Two equal ends.

7/- each **3** for **20/-**

Our confidence in recommending this surer quality Tie is supported by letters of appreciation from all parts of the world.

Sold by leading Hosiers in the Provinces. If unable to procure send for patterns, booklet and name of agent, to sole makers:

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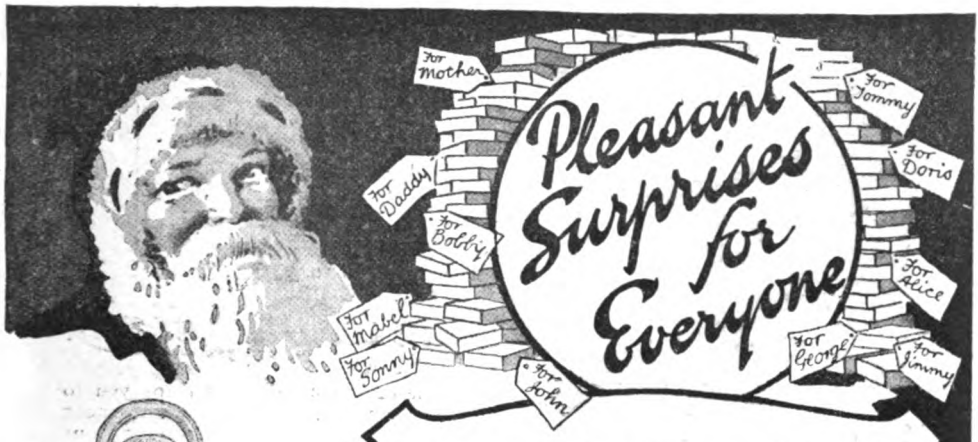
Home Early!

Comfortably resting by the fireside—enjoying his pipe and the wireless programme. That is because he uses a Gledhill "Total Adder," which provides a thorough check on all cash received and makes short work of "cashing up." Get home earlier! Send for special booklet. Our money-back offer ensures satisfaction.

G.H.GLEDHILL AND SONS LIMITED
103, TRINITY WORKS, HALIFAX.



There's no Christmas gift like a watch, nothing used so much, consulted so often, carried so long.

Each Ingersoll is a guaranteed timekeeper.

Year after year thousands of Ingersolls are sold as Christmas presents, ticking messages of goodwill, and giving timekeeping service that is relied upon for accuracy everywhere.

The complete line of Ingersolls gives you the opportunity of selecting watches to suit individual needs at prices to suit your pocket. Give Ingersolls this year.

Prices vary from the "Gem" Solid Gold Expanding Bracelet Watch at 110/- down to the world-famed 5/- Ingersoll "Crown" Watch.

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The famous Ingersoll "CROWN."

5/-

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LOOK FOR THE NAME ON THE DIAL.

Ingersoll Watches, 5/- to 110/- Ingersoll Alarm Clocks 5/- to 25/-

Sold only by Ingersoll Accredited Agents,
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INGERSOLL—word The World's WATCH at Christmastime and all times

The Postman's Knock

Will herald happiness for you when he brings this lovely shoe. At a glance you realise the fine quality Patent leather, the clean crispness of the pin punched design, the fine finish inside and out. Then the wearing—so easy over toe joints, yet fitting instep and ankle like a glove. Best of all, when you use them to

Walk the Barratt way.

Patent Style 2316

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POST FREE.

Overseas Postage Extra.

Same design in Glace Kid (Style 2603) 21/- and Brown Willow (Style 2430) 22/6.

The scientific modelling helps you to develop free, easy, natural movement and attractive poise. Everything about this shoe is first-class. Smart toe shape, new style walking heel, stainless linings, flexible solid leather sole, solid leather insole. One-third at least less than middlemen's prices.

Write for Superb Catalogue of Footshape Footwear Enclose Twopence Postage

Order By Post From The Factory Direct :—

State Style 2316 and size and width. Half sizes 2 to 8, each in 4 (medium) and 5 (wide) widths. Send Footshape, pencil outline of stockinged foot if uncertain of size. Size 8 1/- extra. Postage overseas extra. Mailing weight 2 lbs. C.O.D. deposit 10/-. Home orders send cheque or money order for 22/6. Satisfaction or money back guaranteed.

W. BARRATT & Co., Ltd., 20, Footshape Works, Northampton.

W. R. GROSSMITH'S

(ESTABLISHED 1760.)

LIGHT-WEIGHT WOODEN or METAL ARTIFICIAL

Legs, Arms and Hands

are universally commended for PERFECT COMFORT.

function in conformity with the HUMAN Limb.

NATURE REPRODUCED in Durability and Lifelike Movement but Surpassed in Lightness.

Each Limb constructed to the individual needs, as distinct from mass production.

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No. 40 FOR 4d. (per pair)

Lucky for Boots

The Lace with the Extra Long Wear.

No. 40 for 4d. per pair, is a lace of Silk Finish, extra strength, made in all styles for Ladies' and Men's Boots and Shoes, ordinary or invisible eyelets.

OTHER QUALITIES:

No. 30 for 3d. per pair, Extra Super Glace Yarn.
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YOU NEED HURCULACES IN YOUR BOOTS AND SHOES.

If any difficulty in obtaining Hurculaces send direct to us for a pair and we will give you the name of nearest Retailer who supplies Hurculaces.

Manufactured by :

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The Gift must be worthy. It must be beautiful. It must be useful. It must be companionable. Not many gifts have all these qualities, but they are found in highest degree in *Waterman's Ideal Fountain Pen.* Ripple-Rubber is Waterman's latest. It is exquisitely marked and beautifully coloured. Your Stationer or Jeweller will gladly show you the range of models.

Reduced illustration of pen shows one of the new No. 7 large size in Ripple-Rubber. Note the coloured band inlaid in the cap. This is a Waterman innovation to indicate the style of pen point fitted, and the full series comprises SIX pens each fitted with a different colour band representing a different pen point. The lip mount is 9-ct. gold. Price **37/6.** Pencil is No. 01825 in Ripple-Rubber at **10/6.**

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The joyous feeling of velvety smoothness

The "after" feeling of a shave with a Gillette Blade is a demonstration of its wonderful edge—*the keenest that steel will take.* It makes shaving a treat and used in conjunction with a Gillette Safety Razor it is the ideal combination for the ideal shave.

GILLETTE BLADES In packets of 10 (20 shaving edges) **4/6**
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Sold by Gillette Dealers everywhere:

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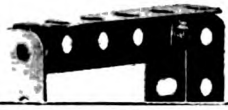
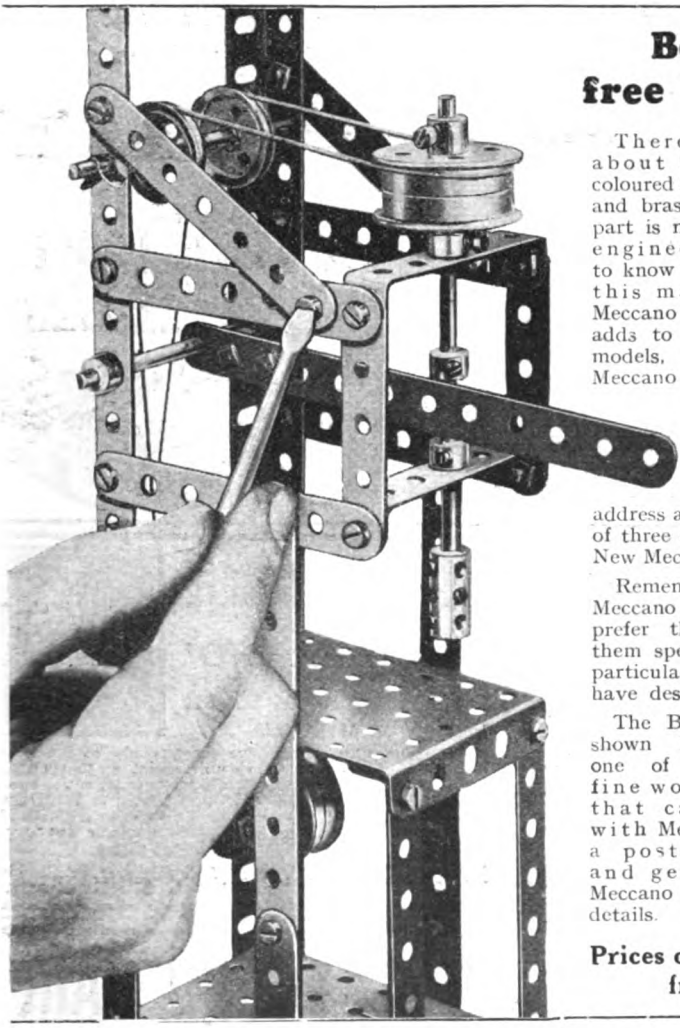
Gillette Blades

TRADE Gillette MARK



ASK TO SEE THE NEW MECCANO AT YOUR NEAREST TOY SHOP

1927 MECCANO

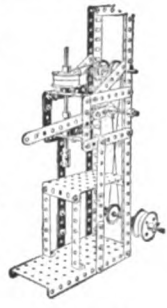


Boys—a new free book for you!

There's something entirely new about Meccano this season—it's coloured! Except the steel Rods and brass Gears and Pulleys, every part is now either green or red—real engineering colours. If you want to know what a wonderful difference this makes to building with Meccano and how tremendously it adds to the realism of the finished models, you must get the New Meccano Book.

You can have it free by sending a postcard to Meccano Ltd., Dept. 55, Binns Road, Liverpool, giving your own name and address and the names and addresses of three of your chums. Ask for the New Meccano Book in colours.

Remember, you can still get Meccano parts with nickel finish if you prefer them or want them specially for any particular model you have designed.



The Boring Machine shown here is only one of hundreds of fine working models that can be built with Meccano. Send a postcard to-day and get that new Meccano Book for full details.

Prices of New Meccano Outfits from 3/6 to 370/-

ALL COLOURED!

MECCANO LIMITED
Binns Road
LIVERPOOL

SORE THROAT

Quickly and Pleasantly Removed

If your throat has become sore and inflamed through smoking or voice strain, if it feels dry and difficult to swallow—take an "Allenburys" Glycerine and Black Currant Pastille.

Slip one in your mouth—now—or any time—Delicious! isn't it?

The soothing effect of fresh black currant juice and glycerine quickly relieves the most irritated throat.

Your Chemist stocks them.

Packed in distinctive tin boxes containing:

2 oz. - - 8d.
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Allenburys Glycerine & Black Currant PASTILLES

ALLEN & HANBURYS LTD.,
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DEAF?

We have possibly the largest range of Aids, Electrical and Non-Electrical, in London. Our latest model is

"THE MIGHTY-MITE."

This small receiver rests snugly in the ear and requires **NO HEADBAND.**

Write, or better still, call. FREE TRIAL GIVEN.

THE DEAF APPLIANCE CO., Ltd.,
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(*'Phone: Mayfair* 4435.)

CHARMING LACE for DAINTY LINGERIE

Try the famous

'GEM BRAND'

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Medium quality, inexpensive laces, made to wash and wear, in widths from the very narrowest up to about six inches, for lingerie trimming, children's wear, etc. Useful lengths in White, Cream and Coffee shades, at POPULAR PRICES. As sold to thousands of visitors to WEMBLEY, 1924 and 1925. Write for Assorted Box to be sent to you ON APPROVAL, POST FREE.

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Don't Envy them. *Imitate them.*

For 135 Years

Rowland's Macassar Oil

has been recognised as the Best Preparation for the Hair.

Sold by all Chemists and Stores at **3/6, 7/- and 10/6** *per bottle.*

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If Teeth Lack Gleam—
just do this

Removing film restores sparkling whiteness

Please try this remarkable new method that leading dental authorities urge . . . note the difference in teeth and gums as dingy film coat goes

THE prettiest smile becomes ugly when teeth look clouded. Now modern science restores "off-colour" teeth to dazzling whiteness.

It's been found that dingy teeth come simply from a film that forms on teeth. A stubborn film old-type dentifrices did not successfully remove. That's why brushing failed you.

Run your tongue across your teeth and you can feel that film now — a sort of slippery coating. Beneath it are the white teeth you envy.

It absorbs discolorations from food, smoking, etc. It is the potential cause of most tooth troubles and prevents proper tooth protection.

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Ship-shape isn't the word.

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P19

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How to Grow the Flowers—Not the Weeds—of the Mind.

EVERYONE possesses a garden in his mind. Therefore everyone ought to be a gardener. For, as Voltaire remarked, one must cultivate one's garden. Otherwise it will grow weeds instead of flowers and fruit.

Bad Habits, Harmful Tendencies, Forgetfulness, Slackness, Procrastination, Irritability, Depression, Timidity, Nervousness, Fear, Boredom, Lassitude, all these are nothing but mental weeds. Unless you cultivate your mind they are certain to spring up just as weeds always flourish in a neglected garden.

On the other hand, when you cultivate your mind these weaknesses and bad tendencies will disappear. Pelmanism enables you to cultivate your mind. It makes you an expert mental gardener. It eradicates these mental weeds. It does more. It helps you to care for and to cultivate your good qualities. In a garden you must tend, cultivate and care for your plants if you want them to grow strongly, to blossom into flowers, or to burgeon into fruit. So it is with your mental garden. Initiative, Concentration, Will-Power, Observation, Memory, Self-Confidence, all these grow in strength and perfection under the scientific persuasion and cultivation of Pelmanism. The seeds are there already. Nature has planted them in your mind. But you have got to look after them. If you neglect them they will never come to anything. Cultivate them and they will grow up, becoming strong and sturdy growths and be your Power and your Pride.

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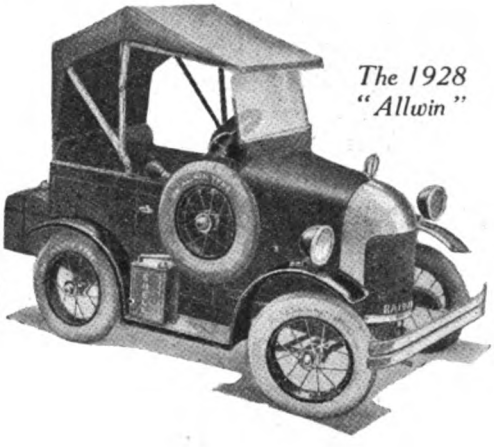

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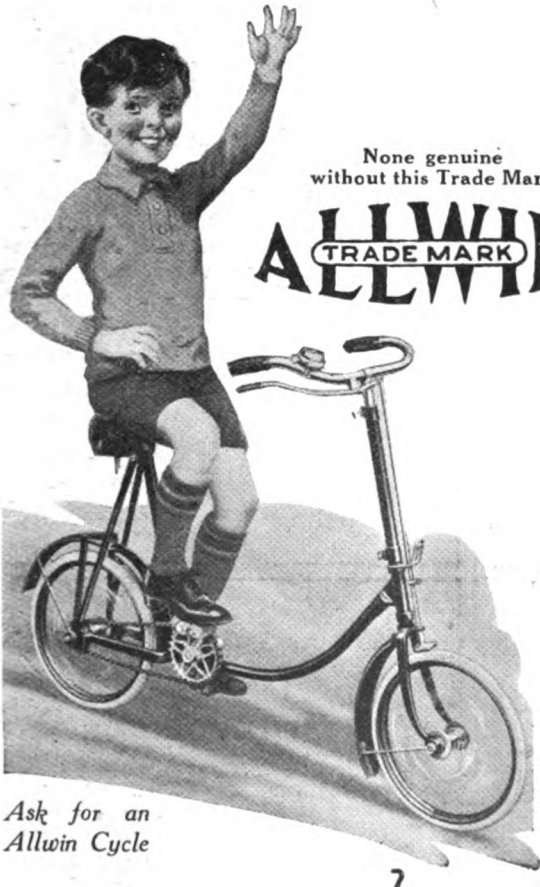

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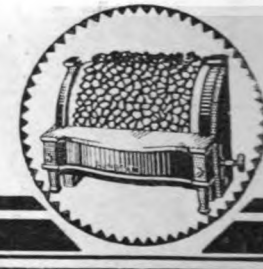

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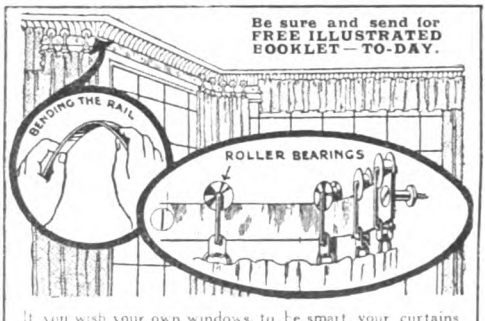

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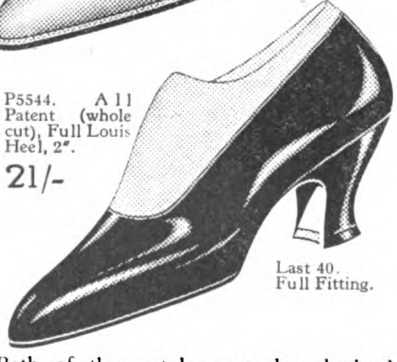

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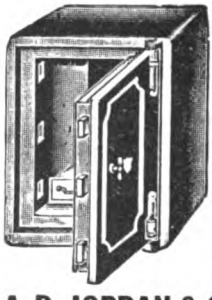

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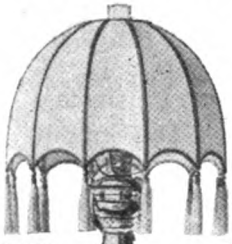

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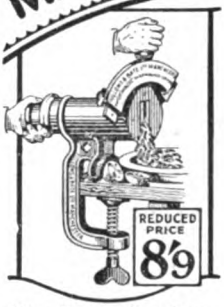

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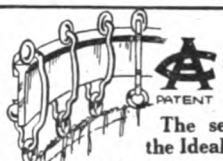

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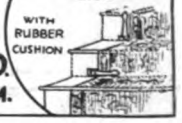

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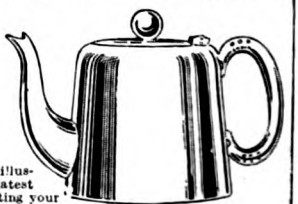

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Appetising and Digestive.

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KELLOGG'S ALL-BRAN for Constipation

IT is terrible—the toll that constipation takes in health and happiness. It thieves beauty. It wrecks vitality. It is the cause of much suffering and disease. And all the while it could be so easily relieved! Kellogg's ALL-BRAN is guaranteed to relieve constipation—safely, permanently.

Doctors recommend ALL-BRAN because it is 100% bran. They know that 100% bran means 100% results.

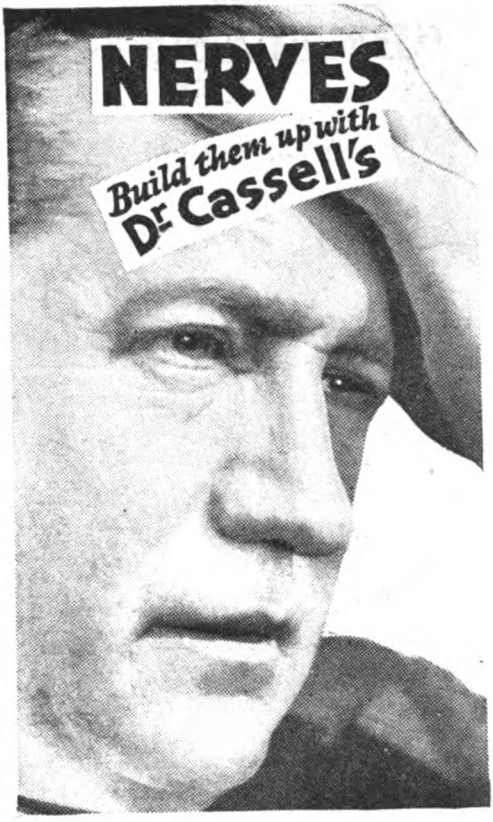
Eat at least two tablespoonfuls of Kellogg's ALL-BRAN every day—in chronic cases with every meal. Serve ALL-BRAN with cold milk or cream—and add fruits if desired.

Sold by all Grocers

KELLOGG COMPANY of GREAT BRITAIN, Ltd.

329, High Holborn
London, W. C. 1.

Made by **KELLOGG** *in* **LONDON, CANADA** Ad 4



This case was serious

It is wrong to give up hope. There is a wonderful reserve force even in worn and worried nerves. Read the case of Mr. Boyes: Dr. Cassell's restored his nerves by *nourishment* . . . . the only way. By Hypophosphites for the Nerves, special Nutrients for the Blood, Digestive Enzymes and Stomachics to aid appetite and digestion.

Dr. Cassell's soon cured

Mr. T. Boyes, of 10, Nook Lane, Sutton Oak, St. Helens, writes:—"Owing to my war experience in India and Mesbot my nerves were completely shattered. After trying all sorts of other remedies without avail, I decided to give Dr. Cassell's Tablets a trial. After the first box, I felt a difference, and now I am completely cured, thanks to Dr. Cassell's."

That is what they will do for you. Start a course of Dr. Cassell's to-day.

DR. CASSELL'S

TABLETS

1/3 & 3/- per box

Sole Producers: Veno Drug Co. (1925), Ltd.

THE
"BRITANNIC"
EXPANDING
Watch Bracelet

THE QUEEN OF WATCH BRACELETS

The "BRITANNIC" Expanding Bracelet has made an unrivalled world-wide reputation for its durability and the charm of its designs.

These bands are guaranteed for five years, and the springs will be renewed free of charge any time during that period through any jeweller.

The "BRITANNIC" may be seen at all good class jewellers, complete with watches in various styles, from 4 guineas.

Also "BRITANNIC" expanding bands alone, with hooks, to replace straps or ribbon.

To avoid inferior imitations see that the name "BRITANNIC" is engraved inside the band.

STUDY YOUR STUDS

Set of O.P. Studs in handsome Velvet-lined Case, 9ct. Solid Gold - **25/-**
10ct. Gold-filled Dennison plate, similar case of 6 **15/-**
18ct. Solid Gold, case of 6 - - **55/-**
Single Studs at **2/6** to **4/6** in 9 ct. gold (according to size); **5/6** to **10/6** in 18ct.; **6d.** to **1/-** in sterling silver; and **1/6** to **1/9** in 10 ct. Gold-filled Dennison Plate.

Quite a new idea for a Man's Gift

Not only novel, but actually a necessity: what more useful to a man than a case of six Studs—one for every purpose—dress, business, soft-collar, back stud, front studs—with free replacement guarantee if they *ever* break.

British Made
O.P.
STUDS
Made in One Piece

From your Jeweller; or in case of difficulty, from the manufacturers, post free if you mention your Jeweller's name and address.

G. H. Johnstone & Co. Ltd.
Sole Manufacturers,
39, Northampton St., Birmingham.

Your duty to yourself—
Be smartly Dressed!

THE man or woman who wishes to succeed cannot afford to neglect appearances to-day. You can be smartly dressed always by making full use of CLARK'S EXPRESS CLEANING SERVICE. When soiled, post your Suits, Costumes, Raincoats, or other garments to be cleaned, pressed and made like new again. No extra charge is made for EXPRESS SERVICE. Just enclose remittance sufficient to cover the cleaning charge and mention EXPRESS SERVICE, when your goods will be returned within 36 hours of receipt, post free.

Some Charges (send for full Price List):—

	Cleaned.	Dyed.
Gentlemen's Suits	5/6 ..	10/6
Ladies' Gowns	6/6 ...	10/6
Ladies' Jumpers	3/- ..	4/6
Hats (Felt or Velour) ...	2/6 ...	3/6

CLARK'S DYE WORKS
(Established 1798) RETFORD

Everybody's Favourite
Quality itself
Mackintosh's
Christmas Assortment de Luxe
18 VARIETIES
TOFFEES
CHOCOLATES
BUTTERSCOTCH
ETC - ETC
EVERY TIN A CHRISTMAS CARNIVAL IN ITSELF

THE

"BRITANNIC"

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Watch Bracelet

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CLARK'S DYE WORKS

(Established 1798) **RETFORD**

Everybody's Favourite
"Quality itself"
Mackintosh's
Christmas Assortment de Luxe
18 VARIETIES
TOFFEES
CHOCOLATES
BUTTER SCOTCH
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EVERY TIN A CHRISTMAS CARNIVAL IN ITSELF
TOFFEE TOWN — HALIFAX

Radio Valves with the wonderful Mullard P.M. Filament will improve any Wireless Receiver.

MULLARD WIRELESS SERVICE CO., LTD., MULLARD HOUSE, DENMARK STREET, W.C. 2.

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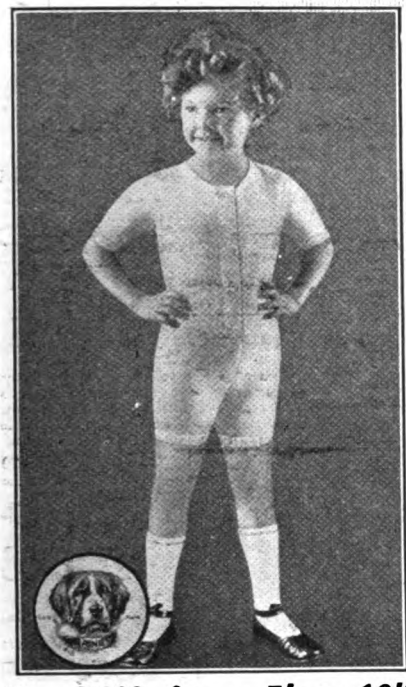

No. C210 from 7/- to 16/3

Children's Combinations. Winter weight. High neck. Short sleeves. Sizes 0 to 8.

For every Mother's Child—"Comfortex"

All a Mother needs to do to be sure of getting a real health safeguard is to ask for "Comfortex" Underwear for her Children.

In "Comfortex" there is cosy, equable warmth, protection from chill and a delicious sense of comfort for Children of all ages, from wee mite to sturdy 'teens.

The fabric from which each garment is made is woven from pure Botany wool and is of surprisingly soft, fine and supple texture. The Dog's Head on every garment guarantees unusually high value for the moderate price asked for "Comfortex."

S&S "Alpine"

"Comfortex"

Underwear *for* Children

Your Outfitter stocks "Comfortex" or can get it for you. Write to the address below for Booklet No. C48, which gives you sizes and prices. *Every "Comfortex" garment is guaranteed by the manufacturers:—*

STAPLEY & SMITH, Ltd.,
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Benger's for backward children.

Parents who have a child growing too rapidly, or weakly, or not thriving, can be sure that extra nutrition of a particular kind is required. There is nothing better than Benger's Food for backward children, and a cupful between meals, and at bed-time, provides just what is wanted.

Benger's Food is always made with fresh new milk. It enriches and converts the milk into a delicious food cream, very easy to digest.

BENGER'S

Food

is sold in Tins, by Chemists, etc., everywhere.
***No.* 0—1/4**; ***No.* 1—2/3**; ***No.* 2—4/-**; ***No.* 3—8/6**

The Benger's Food Booklet contains many valuable hints to mothers with backward children. post free.

BENGER'S FOOD, Ltd., MANCHESTER.

NEW YORK (U.S.A.): 90, Beekman St.
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The Perfect Xmas Gift

THE

BURBERRY

The World's Best Weatherproof and One of The World's Best Overcoats

The Burberry makes an ideal Christmas present — a gift that is needed almost every day in the year.

It keeps its owner dry in downpour or drizzle—snug and warm when there's a cold wind blowing—yet, light and air-free, is cool and comfortable on the closest day.

It is the most valuable Overcoat one can possess—the coat to wear whenever and wherever an Overcoat or Weatherproof is needed.

Burberry Book, patterns & prices sent on mention of "The Strand."

BURBERRYS
Ltd.
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Christmas Gift Box of 20 Blades From all Dealers. 5/-
For Gillette Type Razors only.

For Xmas—

and the whole year round

A razor with an edge like velvet, a smooth, comfortable shave every day of the year—that's what Myatt Daymarked Blades mean to a man. Every Myatt Blade is engraved with the days of the week so that each edge is used in turn.

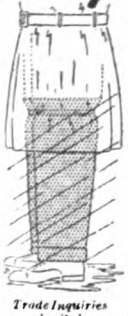
For giving, buy the special Christmas Boxes of 20 blades at 5/-. Ordinary packets of 5 blades, price 1/3, sold everywhere all the year round.

Myatt Blades
PATENT DAYMARKED
1/3 for 5

Sole Manufacturers:
W. J. MYATT & CO., LTD., Argent Works, BIRMINGHAM.

ENGLISH BY BIRTH AND UPBRINGING.

Keep your legs dry!



'Two Shakes'

(Prov. Patent)

WATERPROOF LEG SLEEVES

Put on in a few seconds. Lie at foot of 'mac' pocket. Weight 3 oz. each. Absolutely waterproof. Fasten above knee and protect to feet. Look like trouser legs. *Satisfaction or money back.*

7/6 post free. Abroad post extra.

Crossed Cheque or P.O. State your height. Send NOW and be prepared for the worst weather.

Trade Inquiries Invited.

RICHARD WHITE & CO., LTD.,
6, Galen Place, New Oxford Street, London, W.C.1

Something like a Christmas Gift!

Experts agree that the "Bello" is far superior to other machines invented for the purpose of honing Gillette-type blades. It strops, hones and hollow-grinds the edges of both sides of the blade, giving a perfect shaving edge with every stropping. Its action is automatic.

The "Bello" makes one blade last from 9 to 12 months. It cuts out the cost of new blades, and gives easy shaving every morning. A few movements of the handle suffice to put a wonderfully keen edge on any Gillette-type blade.

A "Bello" pays for itself in less than six months and makes the daily shave a pleasure. Keeps new blades sharp and revives the edge of old ones.

BELLO STROPPER PRICE **9/6**

For GILLETTE-TYPE BLADES.

Any ironmonger, outfitter or man's shop can obtain it for you. Or direct from—

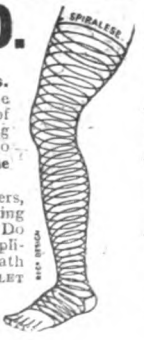
The Bello Manufacturing Co. (Dept. A), Silver Arcade, Leicester
TRADE ENQUIRIES INVITED.

VARICOSE VEINS VANQUISHED.

Marvellous Success of "Spiralese" Seamless Supports.

Over 20 years' experience in treating Varicose Veins prove the undoubted superiority of "Spiralese" Seamless Supports over anything ever offered to sufferers. They are made to measure, but at **50 per cent. less than the cost of ordinary Elastic Hosiery.**

Avoid the great danger of bursting Veins, Ulcers, Eczema, etc., caused by wearing ill-fitting Bandages and Ordinary Elastic Stockings. Do away with unsightly and uncomfortable appliances. "Spiralese" is almost invisible beneath silk stockings. Send to-day for FREE BOOKLET describing the "Spiralese" treatment.



BEASLEY SURGICAL APPLIANCES,
Dept. 39A, 26, Charing Cross Rd., W.C.2

BUY DIRECT FROM THE POTTERIES AND SAVE MONEY.

26 YEARS' REPUTATION proves quality of our ware. £5 Household Crate for £3 3s., containing:—1 Dinner Set for 6 persons, 1 Tea Set for 6 persons, 1 Breakfast Set for 6 persons, 1 set of 3 jugs, Teapot and Covered Butter Dish, **ALL TO MATCH** in our "Eton" pattern in light blue. **ALSO** 3 Pie Dishes and 3 Pudding Bowls (various sizes) plain white. **£3 3s.** packed free, carr. pd. Safe delivery guaranteed. Money refunded if not satisfied. **FREE XMAS GIFT**—**FRUIT SET FOR SIX PERSONS, VALUE HALF A GUINEA.** Secure yours now while the offer lasts. Write for Art Catalogue of Bargains in dainty china, **POST FREE.** *Goods shipped to all parts of the world.* Crest and Badge ware—Estimates free. **THE FENTON POTTERY CO.** (Dept. 1), Royal Fenton Works, Fenton Staffs.

BABY'S PRESENT

For this Christmas or his First Birthday.

EACH of Mother's busy days are lightened by the "Little Buffer" Wheel Chair. Baby can propel himself anywhere, going backwards, forwards, and round obstacles, by a simple movement of the feet. He can pick up his own toys and follow mother about. This chair teaches him to walk but keeps weight off his feet. Fitted safety strap, portable, but cannot overturn.

Write for Booklet.

THE BABY SCOOTER CAR CO. (Dept. S12), 82, Leighton Road, N.W.5.

The little

BUFFER

is the Chair for play and meal-time **now** advocated by doctors and all Baby welfare workers.

USED IN ROYAL HOUSEHOLDS.

The Food-tray keeps it steady. Baby dines by the cosy fire in Winter, and out-doors in Summer. Packs flat for visiting. Sizes 2 and 3, without tray,

21/- & 22/6

Detachable and Collapsible **FOOD-TRAY** 7/6 extra.

POSTAGE.—U.K., free; Europe, 3/-; Foreign, 5/-.

THE most comfortable and hygienic legwear Protection against wet, mud and dust. Perfect spiral fit, pure woollen material with non-fray edges. Men's from 10/- to 20/-; Ladies' from 9/6 to 16/-; with or without spats. Full particulars and shade card on application.

FOX BROTHERS & CO., LTD. Dept. F., Wellington, Somerset. Agents for U.S.A.: The Manley Johnson Corporation, 260 West Broadway, New York.

FOX'S F.I.P. PUTTEES

GIVE COMFORT THIS XMAS

Your friends will admire the quality—you will appreciate the value of these "EASIEPHIT" Models.

Design 13A85. Ladies' Flowered Brocade (Rainbow Effect) Dress Shoe. Smart Toe. Covered Shaped Heel. A charming little model which will harmonise with all the newest in Evening Wear.

Price per Pair 8/11

Also with Low Heel. Design 13A84. Same price.

"Easiephit" SHOEWEAR

represents the highest value for money. You get it from Leicester makers at Factory prices, direct by post or from one of the 260 "Easiephit" Shoe Stores throughout England and Scotland.

Design 1472. Ladies' Suede Moccasins in Wine and Saxe Blue with beautiful Fur binding. Warm Lined.

Price per Pair 4/11½

Cheaper Quality in same Colours 3s. 11½d.

Ideal for Bedroom Wear and exceptionally smart.

Home Postage 6d. extra. Foreign Postage extra.

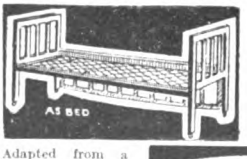
Write to-day for a **FREE** copy of **GREENLEES & SONS' HANDSOME 96-page ART CATALOGUE.** Catalogue shows a fine range of Direct from Factory Bargains in all styles and grades of Footwear for Man, Woman, or Child. We Make—We Sell—We Satisfy.

GREENLEES & SONS

("Easiephit" Footwear), Ltd.
(Dept. S.), East Park Road, LEICESTER

LUXURIOUS COMFORT at little cost

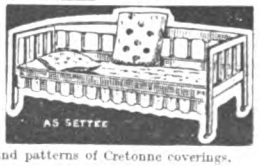
The "ECONOMY" Box Spring Combination.
Box Spring Mattress, 2ft. 6in. wide, red soft top stuffing, with 4 polished hardwood legs (to screw in), mounted on rubber castors, **£3 13 6.**
Mattress to match, filled grey soft linsey, **£1 5 9.**
Oak Headboard, as shown, with socket fitting, **28/6.**



The BOWMAL SETTEE-BED

A thoroughly practical and comfortable Settee Bed, ideal for the Bungalow or small House, or for the visitor.

Adapted from a Settee to a Bed in a moment. Solid fumed Oak, iron frame, wire spring mattress 2ft. 3in. by 6ft. 2in. Complete with woollen flock squab and two cushions.



Write for prices and patterns of Cretonne coverings.

BOWEN & MALLON
183-187 FINCHLEY ROAD, N.W.3.
and at 171a Finchley Rd (Telephone 1809 & 7476)

Everybody can now make lovely Flowers!

Flowers for decorating Home, Church, or School, or for personal wear, can very easily and quickly be made if you follow the instructions given in the Dennison-craft Flower Making Course. You have three beautifully printed volumes with no less than 300 beautiful photographic illustrations for your guidance. Every step in the making of beautiful flowers is explained so clearly that you can begin this delightful work at once with the set of materials supplied free of charge. The Dennison-craft Flower-making Course is fully described in a special Folder sent post free on receipt of the Coupon below.

Ask your Stationer for the

Dennison-craft Flower Making Course

Please fill in this Coupon

Dennison Manufacturing Co., Ltd.,
Dept. S, Kingsway, London, W.C.2.
Please send me a FREE copy of your Dennison-craft Flower Course Folder.

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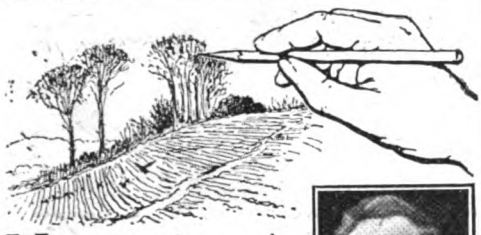

Wintertime is Sketching time

By Percy V. Bradshaw.

(Founder and Principal of the Press Art School.)

Why not make *worth-while* use of the long evenings this Winter? . . . Take up Sketching! Sketching will bring joy and interest into your leisure hours in a way that no other Hobby *can* do.

Don't think that Sketching is a gift possessed only by a few lucky people. *Sketching can be taught.* If you really wish to learn, I can teach you in a way that, *from the very beginning*, will make every minute you devote to it a happy one.

You will start with simple outlines from Nature and pass by easy stages to subjects calling for more skill. Almost before you are aware of it, you will find yourself making happy little character studies of things about the house, your pets, your friends. With pencil and sketchbook "the hours will pass away untold, nor will you wish to pass them otherwise."

My methods are unique, and so is the success which has attended them. For over twenty-one years I have been teaching Drawing by Post. During that time I have trained many of our most famous Illustrators. In my files are lettters from men and women in all parts of the world who have found a new interest in life through my Courses — many of them lucrative careers.

For the absolute Beginner, or for the young ambitious Artist seeking professional success, my Courses offer a training which is sincere, thorough and *demonstrably* successful. Pupils receive *individual* tuition. Every kind of Drawing is covered. Fees may be paid by easy instalments and there are no binding clauses.

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Address: Percy V. Bradshaw, THE PRESS ART SCHOOL (Dept. S.M. 149), Tudor Hall, Forest Hill, S.E.23.

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Fitted 14-ct. Gold Nib

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PRICE 7/6

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"THE BEST IN THE WORLD."

Naval Commander's Tribute to New Method of Learning Languages.

"I may say that I learnt Spanish by your method and am convinced that it is the best in the world." (S. M. 188.)

So writes a Commander, R.N., regarding the new Pelman method of learning French, Spanish, German and Italian without using English.

This remarkable method is revolutionising the learning of languages throughout the English-speaking world.

Indeed, its success is so great that it is making the old saying that British people "cannot learn foreign languages" sound absolutely ridiculous.

Even people who were never able to "get on with languages" before are now finding that this method enables them to learn a Foreign language with the greatest facility and within a very short time.

General Sir Aylmer Haldane, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., D.S.O., writes: "The Pelman method is the best way of learning French without a teacher."

Here are a few more examples of the letters now being received from those who have learnt French, Spanish, Italian or German by the Pelman method:—

"Your system of teaching French is the acme of perfection." (M. 244.)

"I am delighted with the (Spanish) Course. It is a most ingenious and efficient way of teaching languages." (S. W. 350.)

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"I have only been learning German for four months, now I can not only read it but also speak it well." (G. M. 148.)

This new method is a direct method. It enables you to learn French in French, German in German, Spanish in Spanish, and Italian in Italian, and without the use of English. Yet it is so simple that even a child can understand it.

There are no vocabularies to be memorised. You learn the words you need by using them, so that they stay in your mind without effort.

Grammatical difficulties are avoided. The task of learning pages of rules and exceptions is eliminated. Yet you learn to speak, read and write the particular language in question quite correctly.

The method is taught by correspondence, so that there are no classes to attend. You learn in your own time and at your own convenience.

The new method of learning French, German, Spanish and Italian is explained in four little books—one for each language—entitled respectively, "How to learn French," "How to learn German," "How to learn Spanish," and "How to learn Italian."

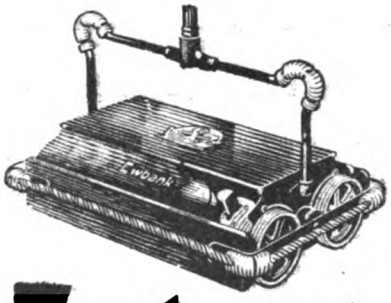
Write for one of these books to-day. It will be sent you gratis and post free on application to the Pelman Institute (Languages Department), 104, Pelman House, Bloomsbury Street, London, W.C.1. Call or write to-day.

Overseas Branches: PARIS, 35, Rue Boissy d'Anglas. NEW YORK, 71, West 45th Street. MELBOURNE, 396, Flinders Lane. DURBAN, Natal Bank Chambers. DELHI, 10, Alipore Road.

I am a *Sleuth!*

I seek the dust in your carpet and the litter on its surface. Impartially I gather both and remove them in my box of large capacity.

Women approve my quick but satisfactory work; my easy action; my readiness, simplicity and long endurance. My name is Ewbank.



Ewbank

THE BRITISH CARPET SWEEPER

The Children's Joy

The kiddies love "Bermaline"—it's so good for them, too. Baked with the choicest Wheat Flour and the finest Extract of Malt, it supplies health and energy to growing children, and is the best bread for all the family. Start with "Bermaline" to-day.

"Bermaline"

The Ideal Wheaten Malt **Bread**

Manhu Flaked Wheat

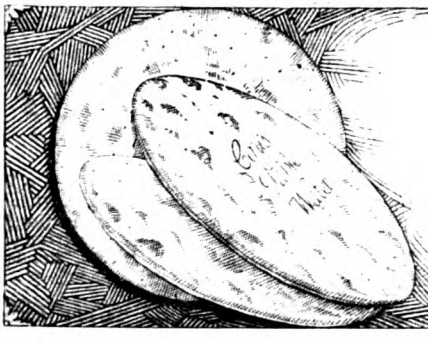
The whole Wheat rolled to delightfully thin flakes. Prepared and cooked by a special process in manufacture, it is easily digested and makes delicious Porridge in five minutes.

Manhu Flaked Barley

As a brain and nerve food there is no Cereal that excels Barley. Can be prepared in the form of delightful porridge and puddings. Full recipes and directions on each packet.

A full sample of both (1¼ lbs. in all) post free on receipt of 1/- postal order and usual Grocer's name and address.

Cheltine Foods Co. Cheltenham Spa



CARR'S

Table Water

BISCUITS

NO OTHER WATER BISCUIT SO GOOD, SO CRISP, SO THIN.

Made only by

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CARLISLE

PLAIN FACTS *about* ASPIRIN

Aspirin is acetyl-salicylic acid, the most efficient and speedy pain-reliever in all cases of Headache, Neuralgia and nerve pains. But it is only *in its purest form* that Aspirin should be taken.

When purchasing aspirin discriminating men and women reject exaggerated statements and claims. They rely on the authentic voice of the Medical Profession clearly expressed in the Medical Press.★ They demand Genasprin—the absolutely pure brand of Aspirin which banishes pain quickly and safely leaving no distressing after-effects.

★*THE LANCET:*—"We found neither free salicylic nor acetic acid in this preparation (Genasprin) . . . this preparation is a particularly pure specimen of acetyl-salicylic acid."

★*ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL GAZETTE:*—"We have no hesitation in describing Genasprin as excellent. Its purity is unquestioned."

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GENASPRIN

(The SAFE Brand of Aspirin)

Insist on* GENASPRIN.** ***At all Chemists—2/- per bottle (35 tablets).

GENATOSAN LTD., LOUGHBOROUGH, LEICESTERSHIRE.

Chivers' Jellies

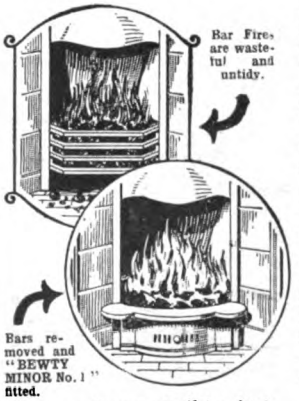
Flavoured with Ripe Fruit Juices

Chivers & Sons Ltd., *Orchard Factory*, Histon, Cambridge.

THE BEST XMAS GIFT

IS THE ONE THAT SAVES MONEY AND ADDS COMFORT TO THE HOME

This is exactly what is done by the "BEWTY" Fire (Pascall's Patent).



Most acceptable to your friends or in your *own* home.

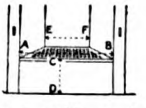
Saves *half* the coal and labour, gives more heat, and quickly repays its cost.

Insist on having a "Bewty" Fire with Pascall's Patent *Adjustable* Bottom Grate which ensures easy and perfect fit. It is *double the weight* and *strength* of imitations, and will last twice as long.

Suits gratings up to 4½ ins. high
A size 12½ to 15½ ins. wide.
B ,, 15½ to 18½ ins. ,,

Fine Cast and Blacked ... **17/6**
Stove Enamelled **21/-**
Carriage Paid.

Other patterns suit stoves up to 24 ins. wide and higher gratings.
Write for Free Booklet and nearest Agent's Address.



Send width of fire from A to B and E to F, also height from C to D, with remittance.

Interoven Stove Co., Ltd.
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REAL REST.

Press the Button— that's all.

Simply press the button and the back declines or automatically rises to any position—release the button and the back is securely locked. The Leg Rest adjusts to various inclinations and can also be used as a footstool. When not in use it slides under the seat.

Catalogue C.3 of Adjustable Chairs Post Free.

J. FOOT & SON, Ltd.,
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(Late of Bond Street.)

The "SWANEE-SAX" Reg.

Genuine Musical Instrument

Being a Slide Saxophone

gives ordinary Saxophone effects and many new ones. About half an hour's practice and you should be able to

PLAY WITH THE BAND. GIVE A SOLO WITH PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT.

This instrument will give a new interest to Music Lovers. Thousands of people have wanted to play a Saxophone. They can now gratify that wish.

This Instrument is British made throughout.

£2 : 10 : 0 Leather-Cloth Case **6/9** extra.

Obtainable from all Music Dealers, or post free from:

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LEARN LIVE MUSIC

Billy Mayerl—the World's greatest syncopated pianist—can make any pianist a brilliant dance musician—BY POST. His course is simple, rapid, and fascinating. Thousands successfully taught. A sure way to popularity. Send 2d. stamp for free booklet and details.

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Model No. 2606. A superior Gibson shoe in Box Calf. Made from selected skins on a full medium toe last with hard-wearing leather soles. Obtainable from most good shoe shops. If there is not an Oral agent in your town, write to address below. **20/-**

C. W. HORRELL, LTD., SHOEMAKERS, RUSHDEN, NORTHANTS.

A BLADE WITH A REPUTATION

BRITISH MAKE

Mab

GUARANTEED SAFETY BLADES

Made from the same high-grade Steel which for 30 years has been used in the manufacture of the famous Mab dwarf Razors.

Price 2/6 pkt. of 10. *Of Dealers or post free from*

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For the throat

Safeguard yourself with an occasional Evans' Pastille.

EVANS' THROAT Pastilles

Sold by all chemists. 1/- per box.

MY LITERARY CAREER.

No. XL By DOROTHY E. NORMAN-SMITH

Story-telling is a deeply-rooted instinct in most people whether they know it or not, and those who have the ability to give expression to that instinct have a source of income at their command.

Mrs. NORMAN-SMITH.

WHEN I left school, I was one of that hopeful band of youngsters who "came out top in English." I also wrote letters which amused my relatives, and caused those well-meaning folk to exclaim: "You ought to be a writer!"

Some years passed; years during which I sat around and waited for inspiration. Then I began to realize that Inspiration was not very good at keeping appointments, so I began to think.

As a result of that thinking, I sent for several prospectuses of journalistic schools. I immediately decided on The Premier School, because it seemed to offer more *personal* interest in its scholars than any other. I called on Mr. Meggy and put my problem before him. He was very kind—and very outspoken! Before I'd been in that office for ten minutes Mr. Meggy made me see that successful writing has to be learned, just as much as any other branch of Art. He made me cut out the "inspiration stunt" and get down to work.

And I did get down to work. I studied those lessons for dear life. When rejected stories came back, I set my teeth and went on. When they were accepted, I didn't trail clouds of glory, but wrote other stories with ever-increasing enjoyment. **And the result was this:** within four months of starting the Course, I had made enough money to pay for a holiday on the Continent for three people! I am now selling quite 75 per cent. of my work, and editors are asking for more!

Now, story-telling is almost the oldest of the Arts. It is a deeply-rooted instinct in the breasts of most people whether they know it or not. Hundreds of men and women could turn out saleable stories if only they had a little technical knowledge; and in the lessons of The Premier School that knowledge awaits them in a most clear and enjoyable form.

I advise all who have a secret urge to write to get in touch with Mr. Meggy before discouragement overwhelms them and they go to swell the tragic list of "mute, inglorious Miltons."

Dorothy E. Norman-Smith.

SUCCESSES DURING TUITION.

Extracts from letters from pupils *actually undergoing instruction:*

"Since I placed myself under your tuition my earnings amount to £57 1s. 0d."
"My total earnings while taking the course amount to £34 14s. 6d."
"Up-to-date I've made just over £50."
"I made my best income last month—£41 5s. 0d."
"That will be 120 articles accepted since I started the course."
"I am glad to be able to tell you that in this short time I have been paid £55 odd for articles."
"I've already earned £150, thanks entirely to you."
"Have had a successful month and made £38."
"So far I have earned £42 since the story course began."

PREMIER SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

Founded and personally conducted —by MR. GORDON MEGGY.—

Separate Courses are conducted in SHORT STORY WRITING and ARTICLE WRITING by Correspondence, and the moderate fees are payable by instalments. The teaching of the School is on practical lines throughout. Every detail that should be known to the new writer is covered either in the lessons or in the Principal's letters. Many of the exercises set take the shape of actual efforts at contribution—a feature that has helped pupils to sell thousands of MSS. during instruction.

The Principal invites the submission of any short MS. upon which an opinion of the applicant's prospects can be based.

SAMPLE LESSON, SUBJECT CHART, and full details will be sent free on application to the "Supervisor."

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The game that has solved the parental problem in 100,000 homes

There are plenty of attractions nowadays to keep your children away from home during Winter evenings. Many of them are very doubtful ones. Encourage the happy home life by installing a Riley Billiard Table; it provides the most entertaining of all indoor amusements.

FOR 14'- DOWN Riley's will despatch at once the popular 6 ft. size HOME BILLIARD TABLE—a replica of their famous full-size tables. Carriage is paid, all risk taken in transit, and 7 DAYS' FREE TRIAL GIVEN to guarantee your satisfaction. The balance of the purchase price you pay monthly. If the 6 ft. size is unsuitable one of the following will rest conveniently on your dining table.

4 *ft.* 4 *in.* × 2 *ft.* 4 *in.* ...	£7 0 0	*or in*	8/6
5 *ft.* 4 *in.* × 2 *ft.* 10 *in.* ...	£9 0 0	18	11/-
6 *ft.* 4 *in.* × 3 *ft.* 4 *in.* ...	£11 15 0	*monthly*	14/-
7 *ft.* 4 *in.* × 3 *ft.* 10 *in.* ...	£15 0 0	*payments*	18/-
8 *ft.* 4 *in.* × 4 *ft.* 4 *in.* ...	£21 10 0	*of*	26/-

RILEY'S "COMBINE" BILLIARD & DINING TABLE

This is the "Cubriole" design. 6 ft. size, £34 10 0 cash, or in 13 or 20 easy payments

Send to-day for FREE Price List.

Riley's "Combine" Billiard and Dining Table is a very popular table for those desiring a billiard and dining table that can be easily adjusted, as desired, in a few seconds. These are the prices for the Round Leg design (Mahogany). See price list for other designs.

5 *ft.* 4 *in.* × 2 *ft.* 10 *in.* ...	£22 10 0
6 *ft.* 4 *in.* × 3 *ft.* 4 *in.* ...	£26 10 0
7 *ft.* 4 *in.* × 3 *ft.* 10 *in.* ...	£33 0 0
8 *ft.* 4 *in.* × 4 *ft.* 4 *in.* ...	£43 0 0

or in 13 or 20 monthly payments.

RILEY'S GIVE 7 DAYS' FREE TRIAL, PAY CARRIAGE AND TAKE ALL RISK DURING RAILWAY TRANSIT.

Riley's Full Size Billiard Tables are known the world over. Ask particulars of new and second-hand tables, repairs and accessories.

This is the "Viceroy" design. Warranted 10 years.

E. J. RILEY, LTD.

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"Burlington" Regd.

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Tan willow calf one-bar shoe. 1¼ in. shaped heel. A model equally popular for smart appearance and excellent wear. Sizes and ½ sizes from 3-7.

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Good Looks *and* Economy

Women who want really smart shoes for all occasions can satisfy their needs at an F.H.W. shop—*economically*. For fashion and quality F.H.W. have a fifty years' reputation; yet, because they are large-scale makers and distributors as well, the prices are lower than elsewhere. Try your nearest F.H.W. branch to-day!

--TEST BURLINGTON VALUE BY POST--

Simply state size, and send a pencil outline of your foot, with remittance. (Foreign orders must include enough for postage.) Examine the shoes in your own home. Try them on! We send goods post free in U.K., *and guarantee to satisfy you.* Send post-card for Burlington Catalogue, which shows a variety of styles.

Freeman, Hardy & Willis, Ltd.,

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WAR ON COCKROACHES!

Wipe out these loathsome pests with THE guaranteed scientific remedy, **"BLATTIS."** Simple, safe, sure. Has stood test 30 years. Clearing out Palace and Cottage without failure.

Tins 1/4, 2/6, 4/6 post free.

Sole Makers:
HOWARTHS, 473, Cowkesmoore, Sheffield,
or from Chemists, Boots' Branches, Stores.

RUPTURE CONQUERED

Its Discomfort and Pain Ended

Wonderful invention acclaimed by medical profession. Instant and permanent relief guaranteed.

If you are ruptured send now for full details of the most wonderful appliance ever invented for your relief and cure. It is not a truss. It is just a neat, washable little belt with a pad you inflate in a second to just the pressure you require to suit your varying needs. You can adjust it in a moment, and it cannot possibly slip out of place. It is so light and comfortable that you positively will not know you have it on. Indeed, you will forget the rupture altogether.

And it holds the Hernia with such gentle firmness that in nearly every case the broken tissue reunites and the rupture is conquered for ever. No wonder doctors everywhere recommend it. **No wonder that great medical journal, THE LANCET, has endorsed it enthusiastically.**

Make a full personal trial absolutely free. It costs you nothing. Pin this advertisement to a sheet of paper, add your name and address, and post it to-day to

THE BEASLEY SURGICAL APPLIANCE COMPANY,
Dept. 39E, 26, Charing Cross Road, London.

YOUR HAIR

no matter how you wear it, will be thick, attractive and healthy if you apply

SERUMS CAPILLAIRES

A beautiful head of hair! Don't imagine it's just a matter of luck. It is the result of proper care and the inevitable outcome of *a thoroughly healthy scalp.*

Most people suffer from minor scalp troubles and neglect them, because, unlike other physical disorders, they do not make their presence felt by pain or inconvenience.

But minor scalp troubles may have serious and lasting consequences, nevertheless, and are the direct cause of falling, lustreless, too dry, brittle or greasy hair—*unless appropriate steps are taken to prevent and cure them.*

Fortunately, since the introduction of SERUMS CAPILLAIRES, this is a simple matter. The safe, quick and efficient action of these serums in *all* hair and scalp troubles is being proved every day. Serums Capillaires are *rubbed* into the scalp, so that they penetrate to the very root of the trouble. And they are *individually prescribed*, varying according to the case being treated and the nature of the hair.

If you suffer from hair that is greasy or too dry, falling hair, dandruff, hair weakened and dulled by hot irons or bad dyes—or any other scalp disorder, no matter your age or circumstances—*write to-day.*

Send no money, but let us have: (1) Details of your case; (2) Sex and age; (3) A small sample of hair; (4) Name and address, to:—

LABORATOIRE DES SERUMS CAPILLAIRES
(Dept. A19), 15, rue de Teheran, Paris (VIII).

Please write clearly and remember that postage to Paris costs 2½d.

By return of post you will receive, in plain cover, *and without any obligation on your part*, suggestions for appropriate treatment.

Our treatments are approved by French doctors, and we have thousands of testimonials from those who have benefited from

SERUMS CAPILLAIRES

Don't hesitate. Take the first step towards acquiring—and keeping—a beautiful head of hair by writing to-day!

Write for patterns now, and for a copy of Allen's famous colour catalogue, "My Lady's Home," sent post free.

YOUR NEW
WINTER
CURTAINS

will be a delight for years if made with Durobelle. Send for the new season's pattern range and see the wonderful scope it affords for charming and distinctive effects. Lovely colours and textures, **all guaranteed fadeless.**

ALLEN'S FADELESS
Durobelle

Plain Casement Cloths in artistic colourings and a variety of widths from 9½d. a yard, 28 ins. wide.
Chenilles & Velours in rich colourings, 50 ins. wide, from **8/11** per yard.
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Art Silk Taffetas and Damasks in beautiful shot and Multi Stripe effects, from **4/6** per yard, 50 ins. wide.
Fadeless Cretonne, 31 ins. wide, in endless variety, from **2/4½** per yard.

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Letters to Bournemouth, please.

WHOOPING COUGH

This distressing cough can be immediately relieved. No medicines are taken. Only the antiseptic vapour of Vapo-Cresolene in the bedroom is necessary. Relieves coughing at night and the child soon recovers. For nearly fifty years a standard remedy for Coughs, Colds, Bronchitis, Influenza, Bronchial Asthma and Croup.

Vapo-Cresolene
Est. 1879

Sold by all Chemists. Write for descriptive booklet No. 21 A to
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GET THIS XMAS BOOK

YOU CAN CHOOSE ALL YOUR GIFTS AT HOME
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ALWAYS AT YOUR SERVICE

Can be instantly raised, lowered, or inclined. The Ideal Table for reading, writing, or taking meals in bed with perfect comfort. It is just as conveniently used with Chair or Couch, and cannot overbalance.

Price with detachable side tray and automatic book-holders (as illustrated) £4:4:0

Adapta Tables from £3 : 3 : 0 upwards, carriage paid.

Write for descriptive booklet A.3.

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CUT TO MEASURE
in High Grade Style and finish for half the price usually charged

BREECHES - 21/-
JACKETS - 72/6

SEND FOR PATTERNS.
State ladies' or gent.'s.

Satisfaction guaranteed from your own measures or cash refunded.

BEDFORD RIDING BREECHES CO.
E. Turner, Ltd. Est. 1908.
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If Ruptured Try This Free

Anyone ruptured, man, woman or child, should write at once for a free trial of this wonderful stimulating application. Just put it on the rupture and the muscles begin to tighten; they begin to bind together so that the opening closes naturally and the need of a support or truss is then done away with. Don't neglect to send for this free trial. Even if your rupture doesn't bother you, what is the use of wearing supports all your life? Why suffer this nuisance? Why run the risk of gangrene and such dangers from a small and innocent little rupture, the kind that has thrown thousands on the operating table? A host of men and women are daily running such risks just because their ruptures do not hurt nor prevent them from getting around. Write at once for this free trial, as it is certainly a wonderful thing and has aided in the cure of ruptures that were as big as a man's two fists. Try and write at once.

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SAFETY RAZOR

ENJOY WINTER SHAVING!

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2/6 PER BOTTLE

AND KEEP WARM!
Of all wine merchants and licensed grocers

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Instruments of quality. 32 Guineas Cash or 21/- Monthly.

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WHY YOU HAVE INDIGESTION

WHEN food enters your stomach, large quantities of acid-bearing gastric juice are at once secreted. If too much gastric juice is secreted the food soon becomes a sour, fermenting mass, which may remain in the stomach several hours, causing great pain and distress. Instant relief can be obtained in cases of this kind by taking 'Bisurated' Magnesia immediately after eating or whenever pain is felt. This safely, surely, and quickly neutralises the excess acid, stops the fermentation, soothes and heals the inflamed stomach lining and at once restores painless, normal digestion. Get a package of 'Bisurated' Magnesia from your chemist to-day and use as directed if you want to avoid digestive troubles.

1/3

in Powder or Tablets—of all Chemists

(either form gives you instant relief)

'BISURATED' MAGNESIA

QUICKLY STOPS STOMACH PAINS

for COUGHS AND COLDS

VENO'S LIGHTNING COUGH CURE

1/3 & 3/- per bottle

corns

Gone for Good.

"Some six months ago I tried Radox Bath Salts for the first time. I had a corn on which I had tried almost every corn remedy to no purpose. I have purposely refrained from writing to you immediately as I wanted to make sure that the cure was likely to be permanent. I am glad to tell you it is. Before I had used half the packet of Radox the brute had gone, and I haven't felt the slightest trace of it since."

H. W. A., Northants.

18th September, 1927.

When you put your feet into a footbath containing Radox, the salts soften the hard outer layers of the corn, and the oxygen penetrates right to the root of the corn, which is thus loosened so that it may be lifted out bodily.

Radox Bath Salts

Remove Corns like magic.

Ask for Radox at your Chemist's, price 1s. 6d. per ½lb. Pink Packet, 2s. 6d. double quantity.

Beautiful & easy to Clean!

Cheerful and bright rooms with less drudgery this winter. No cutting or fastening. Something to match any colour scheme. They make practical Christmas Presents. Write to-day for handsome colour-chart of patterns, showing the full delightful range.

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CORK LINO SQUARES

CHRISTMAS!

NOTHING so delightful or lasting, nothing so acceptable or useful, as a

MORDAN EVERPOINT PENCIL

Any Stationer or Jeweller will demonstrate its good points—no need to ask if it's British Made. Examine his stock for yourself and be convinced.

Buy some Now!

1066 WARDONIA 1066

BLADE

SHEFFIELD ENGLAND

SHEFFIELD'S GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT

Sold everywhere 4 for 1/- Every Blade guaranteed

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THOMAS WARD & SONS LTD

Wardonia Works, Sheffield.

YOU GAVE ME 5 INCHES INCREASE IN HEIGHT

Figure Now Slim and Graceful

Thus writes a lady who recently tried my wonderful discovery which enables people of all ages and both sexes to increase their height without violent exercises or any inconvenience. So that you may test the system without cost I shall be pleased to send it to you for

A WEEK'S FREE TRIAL

NOW is the opportunity of a lifetime, for by special arrangement with Mr. Hamilton Stone you can have free of all charge, and without placing yourself under any obligation whatever, a week's free trial of his wonderful system for increasing the height. Hundreds of people have written praising this system, and saying how in a very few weeks they have increased their stature by varying amounts of from two to five inches. The following is a specimen of the letters constantly being received, and the full address may be had on application :—

Radnorshire.

To Mr. Hamilton Stone.

Dear Sir,—

I am writing to thank you for the great help you have been to me. By means of your Excelsior Course you have given me five inches increase in height, and my figure is now slimmer and much more graceful. I also feel greatly improved in health—thanks to the Excelsior System.

Yours, etc.,

Mrs. J. Davies.

I GUARANTEE GROWTH.

When you have read my book, which will be sent with the Free Trial, you will realise that science allied to deep study and rare enthusiasm has conquered the problem of height-growth, conquered it in the most assured manner, for my faith and conviction are so strong that I am now able to give a signed guarantee to increase your height.

What a wealth of sure hope to those who are thwarted and hindered in all their ambitions and aspirations by reason of their scanty stature.

No matter whether you have reached adult age or not, whether on the border or beyond that of maturity, I say plainly and without fear of contradiction that my easy, harmless, and enjoyable method can and will, if followed as I advise, give you extra inches of height.

Full, commanding height with all its rich gifts of proportion and attractiveness is "Yours for Asking and Having." Think of this all you who have realised how sadly and badly your shortness of stature has told against advancement in life, pleasure in company, and the promotion of human desires.

Send me your name and address, say your present height and how much taller you wish to be, and the free trial treatment, together with the free book, will be sent you post free and under plain cover.

MR. HAMILTON STONE,

28D, Chiswell Chambers, 27, Finsbury Street, London, E.C.2

NEURASTHENIA

(THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY DISEASE)

NATURE'S OWN REMEDY

MEDICINES and drugs, diet treatments, exercise, and "rest cures" have alike proved incapable of, or only partially and temporarily successful in, overcoming this condition. Small wonder, then, that the neurasthenic despairs of a cure.

Neurasthenia arises from lack of Nerve Force. The only method of restoring Nerve Force is to re-charge the system with Electricity, the natural force secreted in the air we breathe.

Don't hesitate. Make up your mind to investigate the Electrological Treatment TO-DAY.

Indecision now may cost you a lifetime of ill-health and suffering. Write for free particulars TO-DAY.

For years the difficulty of the Scientist and the Physician has been to find a means, at once cheap, convenient, and comfortable to the patient, of employing this great vitalising natural force. Until the Electrological Treatment overcame these objections, Electrical Treatment was far too costly, too cumbrous, and too much confined to expensive Hospitals.

ELECTRICITY, THE NATURAL REMEDY

To-day the Electrological Treatment brings it in its best form within the reach of all. You can carry out this most successful form of Electrical Treatment in your own home. You can wear the Electrological Appliances at work or at play.

HAVE YOU ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS?

If your nerves are weak or disordered, if your limbs tremble, if you have numbness or nerve pains, if you are inclined to brood over your affairs, if you are nervous, timorous, and undecided, if you worry over trifles and fear for the future, if your memory and will are weak, if you lack self-confidence, if you feel crushed and choked in a railway carriage or closed rooms, if you feel dizzy in open thoroughfares or nervous among a crowd—these are all the symptoms of Neurasthenia and should not be neglected. A Free Book, entitled "A Guide to Health and Strength," describes how the wonderfully successful Electrological Treatment treats quickly and permanently Neurasthenia, Nervous Dyspepsia, Nervous Disorders, and the many functional troubles due to lack of Nerve Force.

This world-famed treatment is equally beneficial to both sexes. Special booklets for Ladies and Gentlemen. Please specify which is required when writing, mentioning also if the Treatment has been recommended by a Doctor or a cured Patient. Write or call for Free Advice and Demonstrations to the

Electrological Institute, 56, Vulcan House, 56, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.4.

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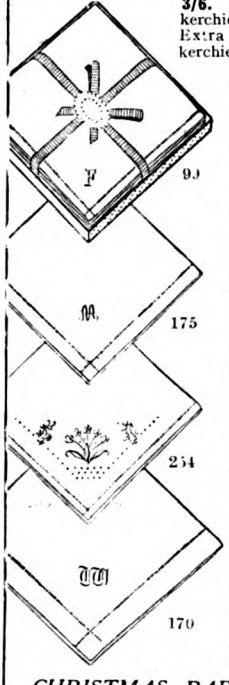

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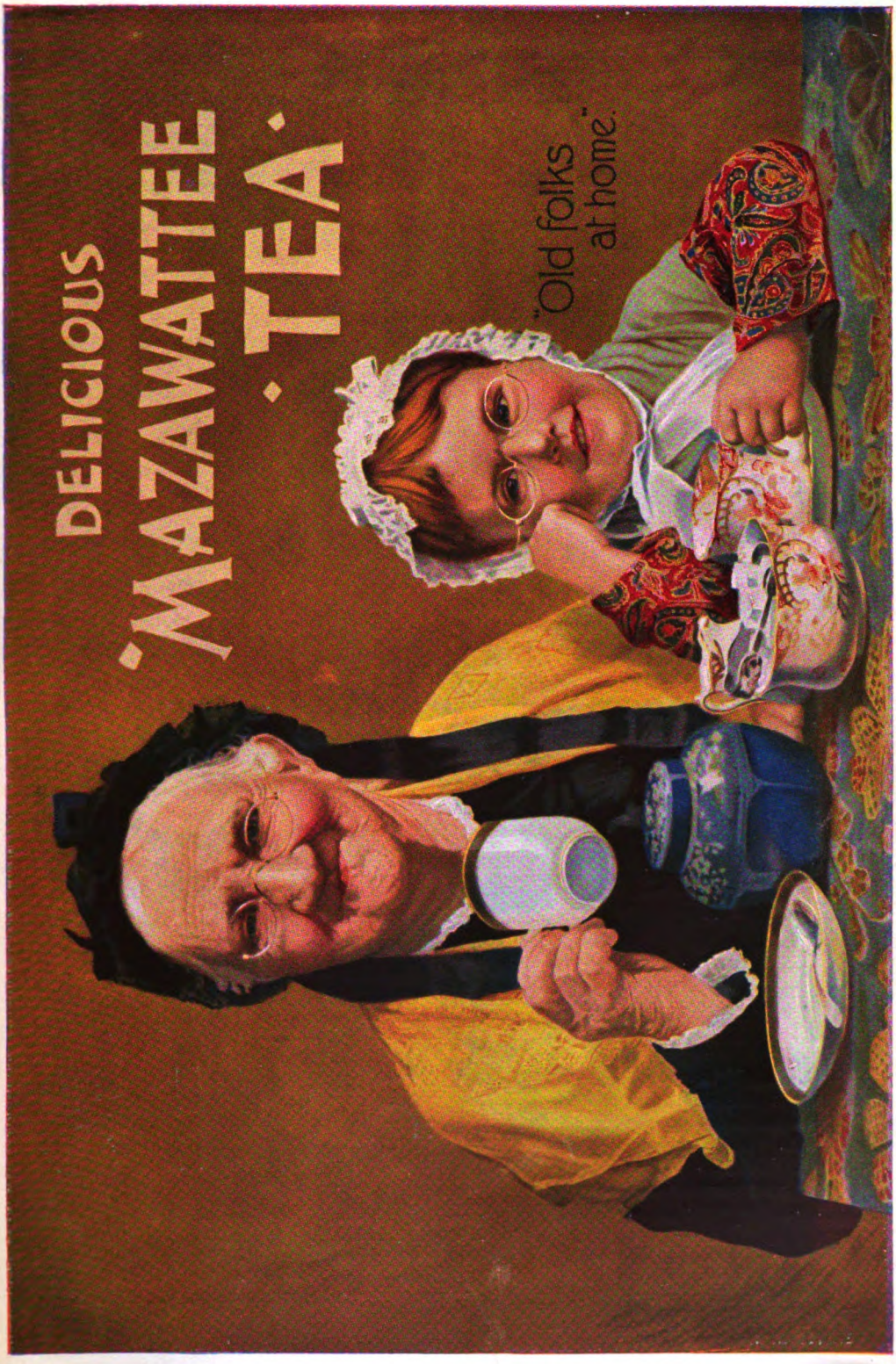
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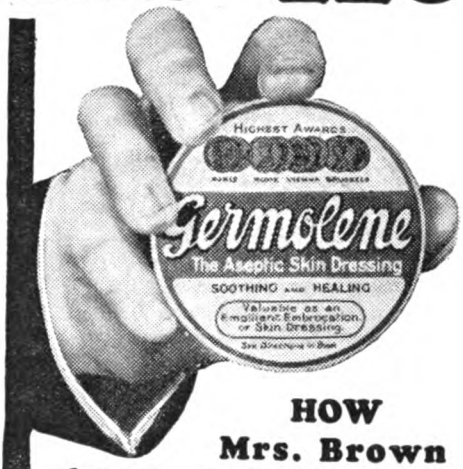

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ALCOHOL

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HAS COME TO RELY ON IT.

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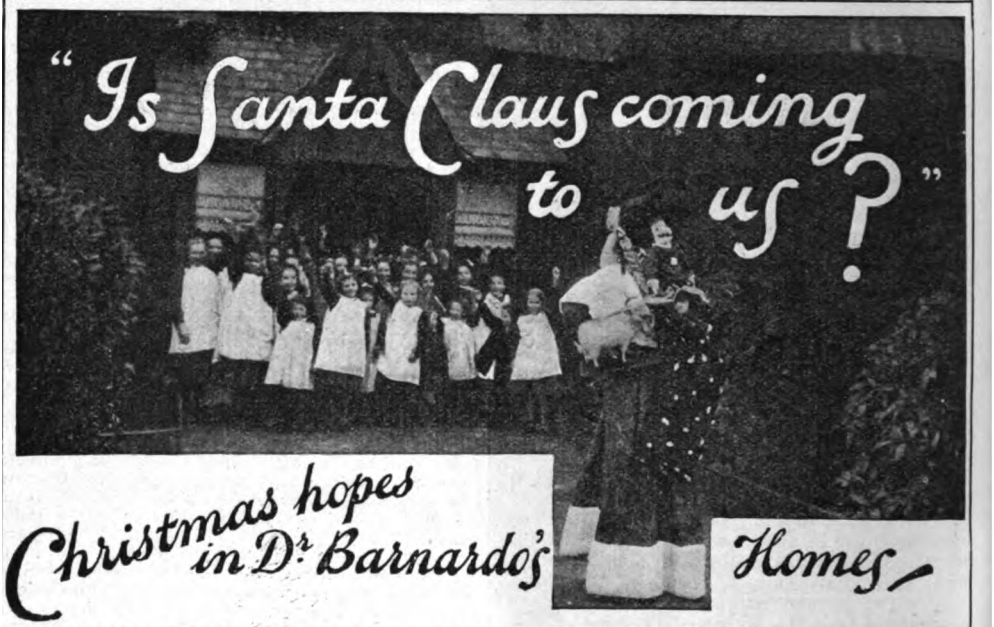
THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *December*, 1927.



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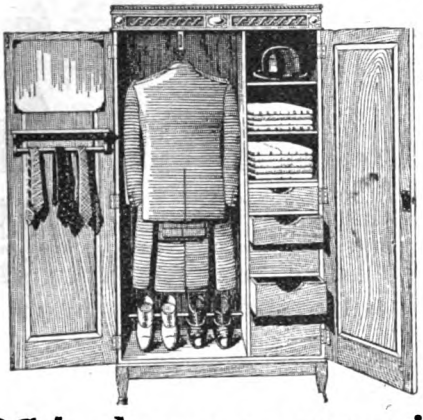

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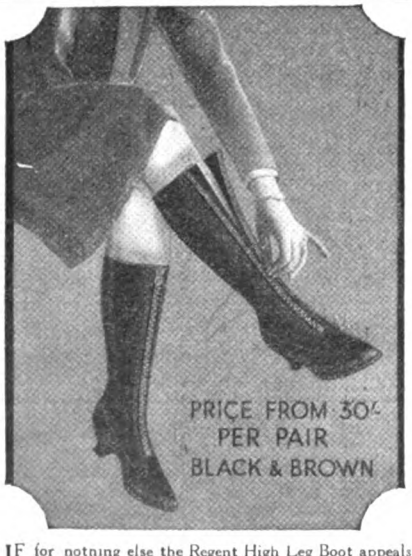

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MAKE your plum puddings and mincemeat with "Atora," the good Beef Suet. Then the Christmas Fare will be rich, wholesome and easily digested.

The best of recipes for each of these, together with nearly 100 other tested recipes for fine puddings and pies, is given in the "Atora" Cookery Book. Send a postcard to us to-day for a free copy.

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Almond Grilled

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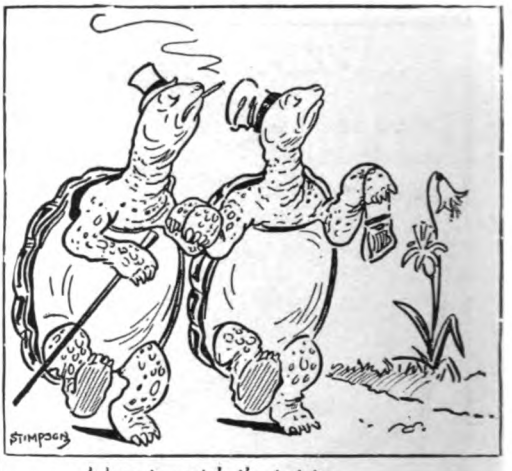
The morning tub of a Javanese baby.

SAUSAGES AND SUNDIALS. A BOOK OF NONSENSE BALLADS.
By LANGFORD REED. (*Jarrolds. 7/6*)

All lovers of laughter should look on Mr. Langford Reed as a national benefactor. A year or so ago he published "The Complete Limerick Book," a delightful collection of little gems of nonsense which many of us have kept within reach ever since, and now he has added to our indebtedness with this equally amusing volume. He has been fortunate in his illustrator, as Mr. Murdock Stimpson's drawings have just the right touch of absurdity to give added point to the verse.



I love to watch the tortoises,
On summer evenings, courting;
They're so well bred and dignified—
Despising amorous sporting.

THE SHAPING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE.
By AMY CRUSE. (*Harrap. 7/6*)

The story of English literature from the days of the Saxons to the end of the eighteenth century is here told from a point of view that is both fresh and entertaining. It is through the eyes of the reader rather than the writer, the playgoer rather than the dramatist, that Mrs. Cruse has envisaged her subject, and the result is an exceptionally readable volume. Particularly interesting are the chapters in which she deals with dramatic performances in Tudor times, the vogue of the Coffee House, and the rise of newspapers.

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Make your stews and savouries taste good

Oxo broth and gravies are splendid for children, and can be made in a few minutes. The rich beef-juices of Oxo are digestives of the utmost value, so that Oxo dishes are wholesome as well as tasty and nourishing.

Make it a rule to "add a little Oxo", it makes all the difference.

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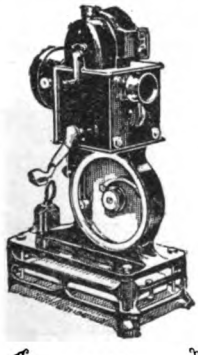

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Poems by GEORGETTE AGNEW.
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Michael and the Rose

Ulysses's ship in Corfu Harbour.

Tradition claims that this isle was once the ship which carried Ulysses home to Ithaca. On its return a revengeful Neptune turned it to stone.

THE GLORIOUS ADVENTURE.
By
RICHARD HALLIBURTON.
(*Geoffrey Bles. 16/-*)

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By ALBAN M. PHILLIP.
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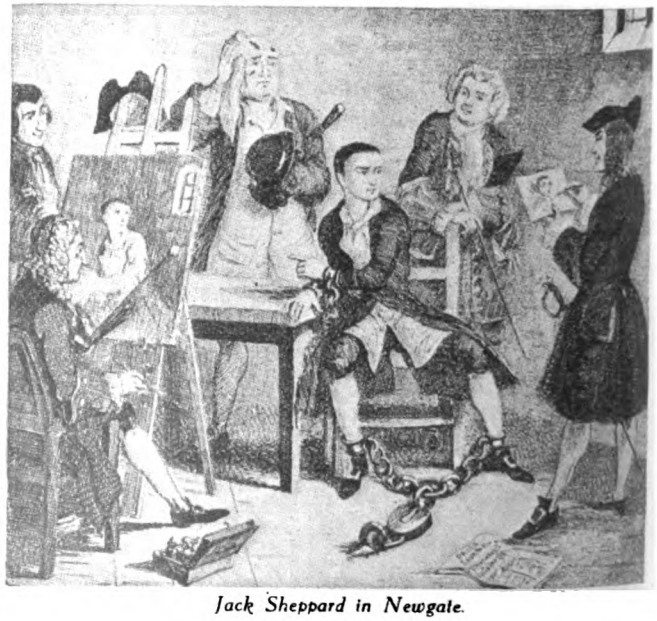

Jack Sheppard in Newgate.

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CAN BE CURED BY

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AGOTAN

Doctors say:—

In our wet Camp of 1926, men were continually reporting sick with sciatica or lumbago. Agotan cleared the trouble up in 3 or 4 days' time.
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Of proprietary remedies I have so far found nothing to equal Agotan. With Agotan the amount of Uric Acid excreted through the kidneys has frequently been doubled and trebled, without any great alteration of diet and exercises.
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Agotan is not a Quack Medicine; it is Official in the Brit. Pharm. Codex, 1923. It is sold as powder, tablets and ointment, and is taken under the directions of the Physician.

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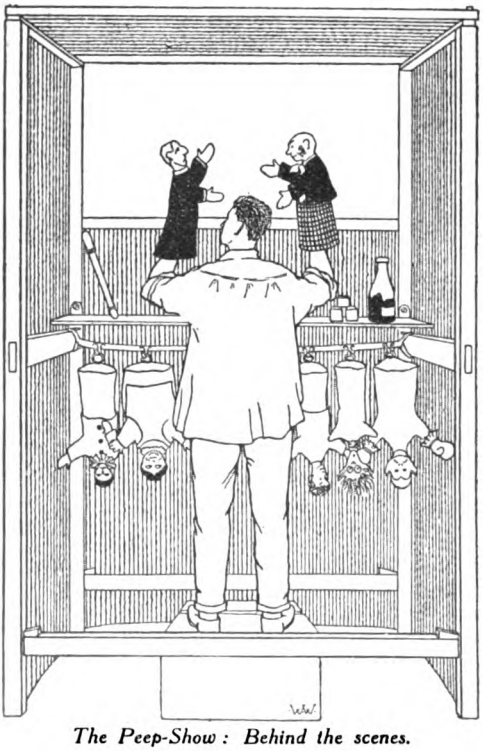

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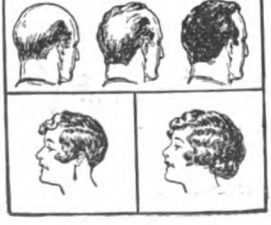

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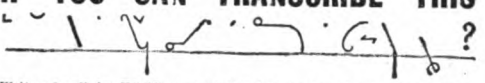

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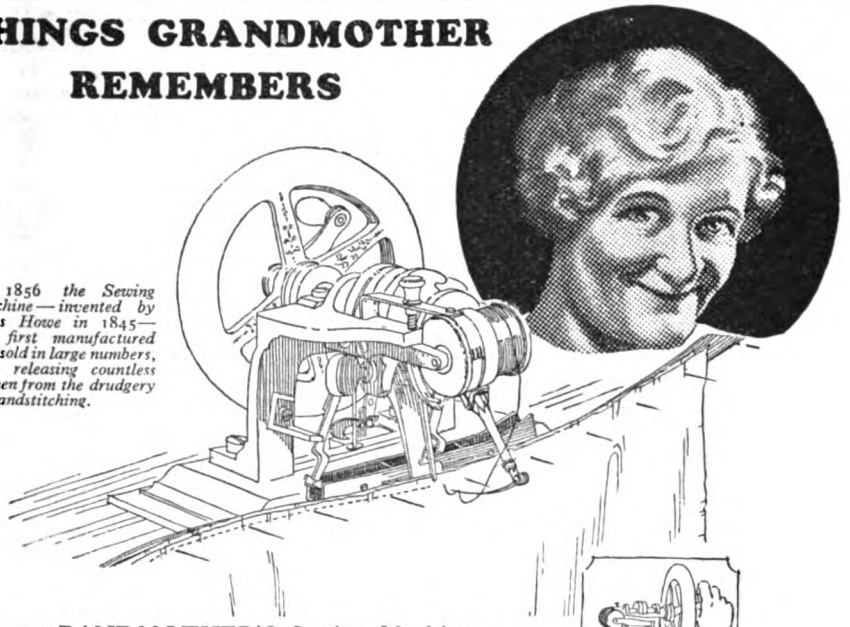

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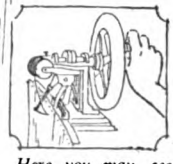

Here you may see how the cloth to be sewn was impaled upon a row of spikes. These carried it under the long curved needle at the end of the moving arm and as one turned the handle on the right, so the arm drove the needle and its cotton through and through the hanging material.

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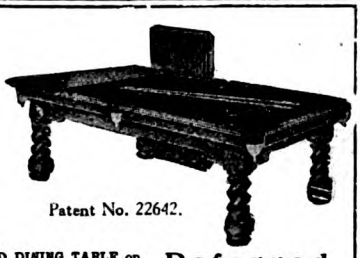

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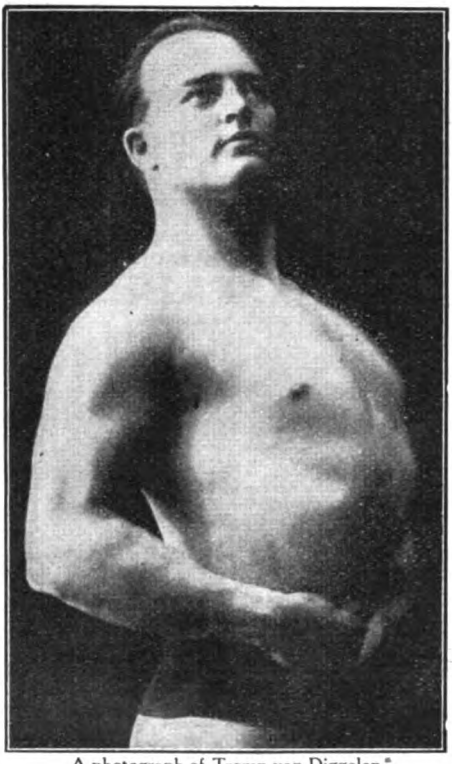

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He was a weak and sickly boy. His life had been despaired of; but he refused to accept defeat. He knew that health was possible, if he could discover the right way to gain it. To-day the world does not contain a healthier man.

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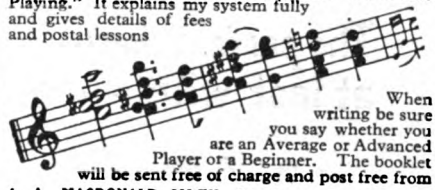

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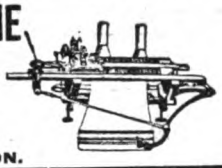

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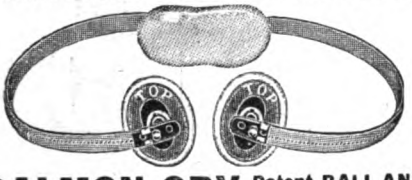

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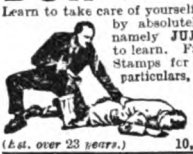

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154. Gentleman (clerk) desired eradication of chronic Constipation and Indigestion, and increase in weight, wrote on August 20th, 1927:—"As you know, I suffered from chronic constipation when I first put myself in your hands. I took laxatives daily without any result and had almost given up hope of ever finding a cure. For the past three weeks I have secured two actions per day without trouble. Incidentally I feel better in every way, having lost the previous regular headaches, and have now gained seven pounds in weight. Assuring you of my deepest thanks for your attention to my case."

208. Gentleman, age 50, wrote on September 29th, 1927:—"Dear Mr. Saldo,—As a result of your treatment, I have reduced my waist measurement by over 4 ins. and have entirely lost the feeling of distension from which I previously suffered, and feel as fit as possible. To have achieved this in so short a time and with so little effort is most gratifying, especially after Swedish and other systems of a more strenuous nature practised over long periods had failed to effect any improvement. I am indeed most grateful to you."

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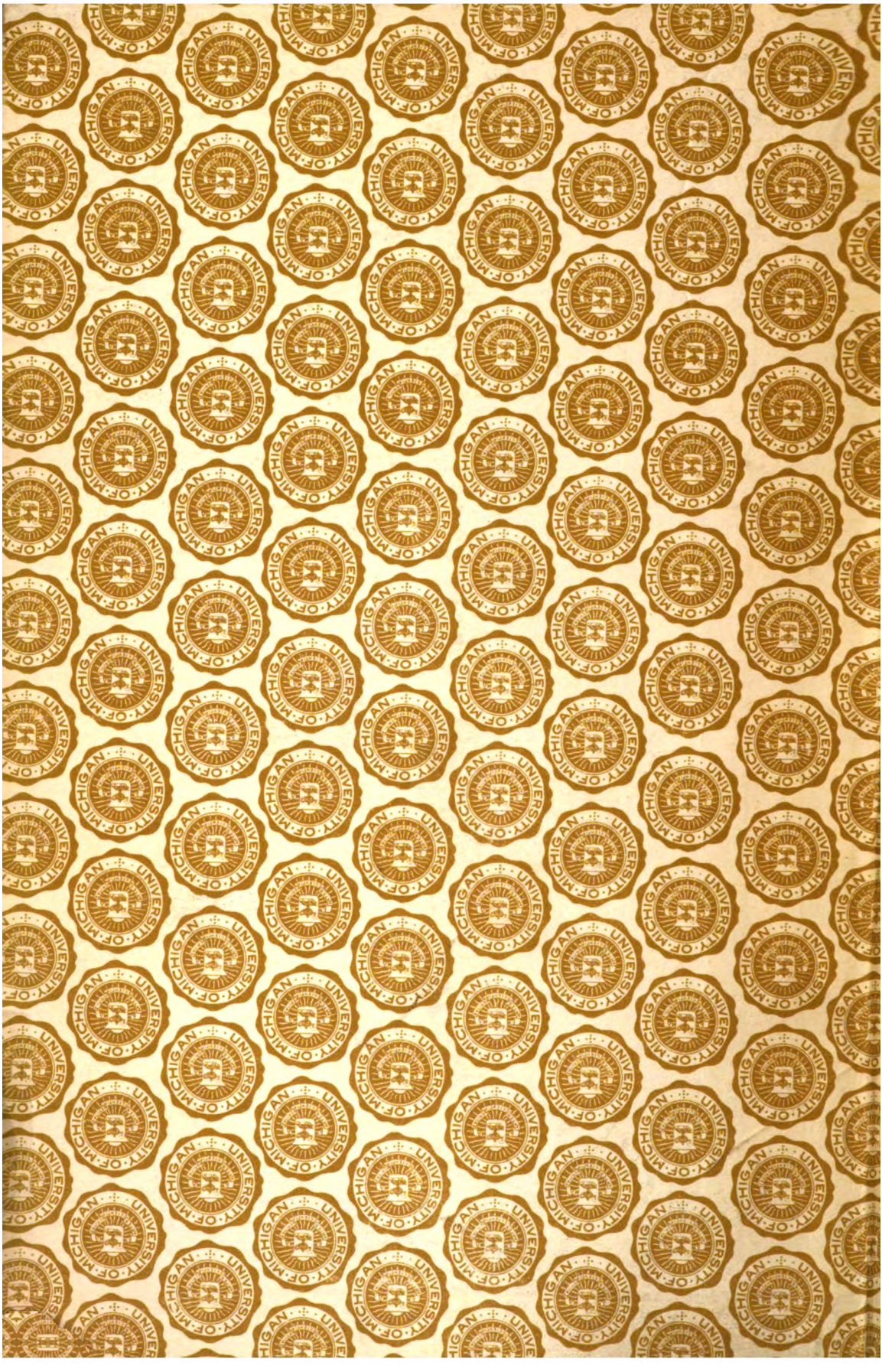

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